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"It is Soft Hand who comes, Running Deer," I said, giving myself the name which the Indians had bestowed upon me.
Page 29. *Frontispiece When Washington Served the King*

# WHEN WASHINGTON SERVED THE KING

**A Boys Story of Border Warfare in 1754**

By JAMES OTIS

Author of "With Washington at Monmouth," "With Warren at Bunker Hill," "With Lafayette at Yorktown," etc., etc.

**With Six Page Illustrations by J. Watson Davis**

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WHEN WASHINGTON SERVED THE KING
By James Otis

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## NOTE.

THERE have been no additions made to the incidents of Major Washington's march from Williamsburg to Fort Le Boeuf, or, in fact, to any portion of the true account. The persons described herein were those who actually accompanied him in 1753 and 1754, and in no single instance has any adventure been imagined or elaborated upon.

Washington's private journal; Samuel Gist's report to the Ohio Company, and Governor Dinwiddie's letters regarding the several matters referred to, have been drawn upon for all the material used.

THE AUTHOR.

## ONLY A REMINDER.

"CANADA, from the year 1608, when the first permanent settlement was made, had been in the undisputed possession of the French. Both the French and English claimed the lands in the Western Continent, by the right of prior discovery, and possession or settlement, without any regard to the right of the native inhabitants.

"The claims founded on discovery and actual occupation had hitherto covered but a small portion of the continent, and the European nations, by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, adjusted, in a superficial manner, the distribution of North America between the three dominant powers, England, France and Spain. This agreement was very imperfect, however, inasmuch as the colonies of these three powers occupied but a narrow band along the Atlantic coast; and though their charters claimed the whole country from sea to sea, yet as they were entirely unacquainted with those vast regions, it was not improbable that they would soon be again involved in new difficulties respecting boundaries.

"In 1673, a party of French from Canada dis-

covered the upper waters of the Mississippi river, at the spot at which it is joined by the Wisconsin; and sailing down it as far as the Arkansas, they decided from its course that it emptied into the Gulf of Mexico. They then returned by land to Canada.

"On this discovery the French nation based its right to the great Mississippi valley. Having sailed down the river, they claimed all the lands watered by its tributaries. They afterwards took possession of the country lying near the mouth of the river, and about the year 1722, a small colony was planted at New Orleans. In ten or twelve years their settlements in Louisiana increased and began to extend up the Mississippi.

"Thus the French possessed two considerable colonies, one of them north, and the other south, of the English possessions. Their settlers from Canada approaching the Ohio river, and those of Louisiana manifesting a disposition to occupy the valley of the Mississippi, the project was formed of connecting these two colonies by means of a chain of forts, running along the Ohio, and down the Mississippi. This plan interfered with the chartered rights of the English, extending from sea to sea, and would have confined them to the eastern side of the Alleghany mountains.

The Indians, too, who had hitherto been friendly to the English settlers of Virginia, becoming alarmed for their safety, began to side with their nearer neighbors, and by them they were soon instigated to make depredations on their former friends.

"Already had the French, by the erection of a strong fort at Crown Point, secured the command of Lake Champlain, and a connected chain of posts was maintained from Quebec, up the St. Lawrence, and along the great lakes; until at last they approached the Ohio, and entered on the territory which had been actually granted by charter, to the colony of Virginia.

"The English traders were warned not to enter the country claimed by the French to trade with the Indians. A few, disregarding the warning, were captured and carried as prisoners to Presque Isle,* on Lake Erie, where the French were then erecting a strong fort. This was done, too, when the two nations were at peace with each other: 1753.

"The Indians, instigated it is supposed by French emissaries, commenced their savage warfare. The great valley of the Shenandoah was then but thinly peopled. The farmers who had

*Now the city of Erie, Pa.

ventured so far from the civilized world seemed careless about the society of their species, and took up their positions out of sight of even the smoke from their neighbors' chimneys. These isolated families often suffered from the incursions of the savages, who spared neither age nor sex. The near approach of their old enemies, the French, and the ascendency which they were known to possess over the wild savages of the forest, naturally filled these desolate families with fear. They called upon the governor of Virginia for aid.

"Governor Dinwiddie had already despatched a messenger over the mountains, with presents for the Indians, and instructions to ascertain their temper and designs, and, if possible, to find out the intentions of the French. He, however, became alarmed at the tales told him by the Indians, to whom he delivered his presents, and returned without effecting his object,

"Orders now arrived from the British ministry, for the governor of Virginia to build two forts near the Ohio river, to prevent the encroachments of the French, and to hold the Indians in check. But the orders arrived too late. The French had already taken possession of the territory bordering on the Ohio.

"Thus commenced the Seven Years' War in America; called, by the provincial soldiers who were engaged in it, the Old French War. It was destined to develop the military talents and energies of Washington, and to transfer the possession of Canada and the other northern provinces of America, from France to Great Britain.

"The French having taken possession of the country and built forts in different places on the Ohio, Governor Dinwiddie, in obedience to the orders of the British ministry, determined to assert the right of his king, as well as that of the province of Virginia, to the stations thus occupied, and if possible effect their dislodgment. For this purpose he deemed it advisable, at first, to despatch an envoy to the French commandant, ordering him to retire from the territories of the British. This service was one of great delicacy, and full of danger and difficulty. The envoy would be under the necessity of passing through an extensive and almost unexplored wilderness, intersected with rugged mountains and considerable rivers, and inhabited by fierce savages, who were either hostile to the English or of doubtful attachment.

"Such were the difficulties and dangers of the

service that not one of the many aids and immediate attendants on the governor offered to undertake it, and Dinwiddie began to fear that it would be necessary to abandon the project.

"In this crisis Washington, then only twenty-one years of age, volunteered his services.

"The governor, a kind-hearted old Scotchman, thankfully accepted the proffer, saying, at the same time, that if he conducted himself to his satisfaction and that of the council, he would have no cause to repent having undertaken the mission.

"On the 30th of October, 1753, Washington received his commission and instructions from the governor, together with a letter to the French commander, inquiring into his designs and the authority by which he dared to invade the dominions of the King of England, and ordering him forthwith to evacuate the territory of Virginia. Besides delivering this message, his instructions required him to obtain information of the position, force and designs of the French through the aid of the friendly Indians on the borders."

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# WHEN WASHINGTON SERVED THE KING.

## CHAPTER I.

### WHY I WRITE THIS STORY.

IN WINTER QUARTERS AT VALLEY FORGE.

*February the 5th*, 1778.

IT is seemly that I make my apologies for attempting to set down in order that others may read, that which happened when our commander-in-chief was only a major, and I, John Davidson, a hulking lad of nineteen, then but lately released from captivity among the savages.

If it had been my good fortune to have fitted myself for the office of clerk, as was my desire before being taken prisoner by the Indians, then might it be possible for me to carry out in proper fashion the suggestion made by General, the Baron Steuben, no longer ago than yesterday; but, as may be seen, I am undertaking the task regardless of my many imperfections, and by way of apology will explain why I have dared to make the effort.

We, meaning the American army, left Whitemarsh on the 11th day of last December to come into winter quarters here while the redcoats are living on the fat of the land in Philadelphia.

The march was unusually long because of the fact that many of us are put to it hardly for shoes, which renders traveling a sore hardship, and not until the 19th day of the month did the last of our column arrive, looking more like beggars than soldiers who count on freeing this fair land from the oppressive rule of the king.

Immediately after our arrival an order was issued from headquarters, calling upon all men who had enough of clothing to permit of their moving about without absolute suffering, to build huts after the following description :

"Each to be fourteen feet by sixteen on the ground ; the sides, ends and roofs made with logs ; the roofs made tight with clay ; a fireplace made of wood, and secured with clay on the inside, eighteen inches thick ; this fireplace to be in the rear of the hut ; the door to be in the end next the street ; the doors to be made of split oak slabs, unless boards can be procured ; the side walls to be six feet and a half high."

When that labor had been performed the in-

spector-general, Baron Steuben, set about making real soldiers of us, for we needed much licking into shape, as any who saw us last fall will admit. The daily drills were of benefit to us in more ways than one, since such work served to prevent our minds from dwelling constantly upon our homes, thereby engendering a longing which at times threatened to be a veritable sickness.

As a matter of course there are many days when it is impossible to go through the evolutions because of storms, and I have come to look forward with something very like horror upon those hours of enforced idleness, when one cannot refrain from speculating upon the result in case the king's forces succeed in whipping us.

And just now it would not require a very heavy force to crush this entire army, for I am told that we are not above ten thousand in number, half clad, hungry and homesick, while in Philadelphia, Howe has near to twenty thousand men fit for duty even during this season of the year. Therefore one may see that it is of the highest importance our officers prevent us from dwelling upon the possibilities of the future.

Yesterday I was trying to fashion a pair of breeches out of a well-worn blanket I bought from a militiaman of New Jersey, and allowing

myself to think longingly of the home in Virginia, when General, the Baron Steuben, walking slowly along the regimental street, espied me. He must have seen written on my face the misery which was in my heart, for he halted as I arose to salute, and said kindly:

"I have just heard, Lieutenant Davidson, that you were acting as Indian interpreter for our commander-in-chief, when he, then only a major in the Virginia forces, was sent on a particularly dangerous mission?"

I have set down this speech as it would have been had the general been able to speak English as we do, for I cannot hope to make up the words of such letters that one can read them, for his was an exceedingly odd accent.

It is also necessary to explain that I hold a commission in the Life Guard, that body of men which is constantly near the commander, and was promoted to the company by General Washington himself because of services which I was so fortunate as to have rendered him in 1753 and 1754, when we were under the orders of Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia.

Because General, the Baron Steuben, had stated no more than what all knew to be a fact, and since there was good reason for me to be

proud of having served under our commander when he was a major, I at once replied to the question as might have been expected.

"There must have been many hardships encountered during that journey and the siege of Fort Necessity, which were far worse than any you experience here?"

"Ay, sir," I replied, my mind going back rapidly into the past. "We saw much of suffering in those days."

"And yet now you are giving way to homesickness?" he said, rather than asked, with a pleasant smile on his lips.

I was ashamed to confess the fact, and yet could not deny it, therefore hung my head like a lad of twenty, instead of a gray-haired man of near about forty-five.

"Why do you not write down that story, Lieutenant Davidson?" the inspector-general asked as if it was really a matter which interested him. "It would prevent your mind from straying back to Virginia during these idle days, and might be good reading for some of us here who think men never suffered before as do we."

"But I am no scholar, my general."

"Well? What need to choose your words when setting down that which will stir the blood

of every brave man? Write it out, lieutenant, and if it serves no other purpose than to make one man in this encampment forget his troubles, then you have been well repaid."

Even after that speech I would have protested that I could not perform the task properly; but he gave me no opportunity for further words with him, since he walked rapidly away, crying out over his shoulder as he went:

"Write the story of what the commander and you did when you were lads, and bring to me each day the pages which have been filled with the story."

We are hungry here at Valley Forge; even the horses are starving to death. We suffer continually from the cold, and oftentimes when it snows at night we awaken to find ourselves covered with a blanket of ice. One cannot prevent himself from becoming gloomy as to the future, nor from longing for home, therefore, as General the Baron suggested, it may be that I can keep one man from thinking of the possibilities by writing out the story, and that one man will be myself, therefore I shall make the attempt, although almost any other could do it better.

And this is my apology for undertaking that

which is likely to prove a task far beyond my poor powers.

* * * * * * *

In the year 1751 I was released from captivity through the efforts of Master Lewis Burwell, who at that time was acting governor of Virginia, I having been held a prisoner by the Delawares near to ten years.

I was nine years old when my father's house, situate about forty miles north of Williamsburg, was attacked and both my parents cruelly murdered.

Of my life while in the hands of the savages it is not necessary I should speak, since my only purpose in writing is to relate the adventures which I shared with General Washington when he was no higher on the military ladder than a simple major.

It was by no means an easy task for me to enter suddenly into the life of the white people, and during a time I was almost as near being starved as I am to-day here at Valley Forge, through not knowing how to turn my hand to such labor as would bring money into my keeping.

Indeed, more than once was I tempted to go back to the Delawares, for savages though they were, I could find some among them whom I

might call friends; while in Williamsburg, where the houses crowded one against another in many places, there was no person who cared whether I lived or died.

In the year 1752 Master Robert Dinwiddie was appointed lieutenant-governor of the colony, and immediately after coming into the office he desired to send out messengers to the Indian tribes near about soliciting their friendship. Then it was that I found opportunity to earn my bread, for employment was given me as interpreter under those who desired to hold communication with the savages, and in such capacity was I serving when it became known that the governor purposed to send a messenger over the mountains to learn what was being done by the French in the way of stirring up discontent against the English among the red men.

Fearing lest some other might be taken in my stead, I begged permission to accompany the messenger, and before we were two days' journey from Williamsburg I sincerely regretted having done so, for he who had been sent as the governor's mouthpiece was as rank a coward as ever stepped.

He soon lost the small remnant of courage which remained to him from having lived among

brave men, and came back at full speed like a whipped cur, when I would have agreed to travel alone as far as the great lakes,

As might have been expected by one who knew as well as did I to what lengths the French settlers would go in way of double dealing, matters in the colony grew from bad to worse, until even a child might have seen that the Virginians must make some move unless they were willing their lands should be overrun by enemies both red and white.

While staying in the town I had heard of the young man Washington, who, when only nineteen years old, had been made adjutant-general of the northern district of the colony, and holding the rank of major, and had not hesitated to say openly that it would have been better for all in Virginia if such an important office had been given to a man of experience, instead of to a boy.

My opinion underwent a decided change, however, on the day the young officer entered Williamsburg for the purpose of volunteering to act as the governor's representative among the savages.

There must have been a brave heart in the bosom of a lad who would seek such a mission

after the first messenger had returned with his doleful tale of danger, and I watched him carefully when he went to present himself before the governor.

There was much in the lad to admire; but at the outset I put it down to the fact that he had been one of the king's officers these two years, and was come to "feel his uniform," as the saying goes.

This time I did not seek the position of interpreter, for I had no desire to travel two or three days for the sole purpose of running back to the town; but before nightfall of the same day on which the young major appeared before the governor, he sought me out, much as if I had been his equal in station.

"I am in search of a brave man who can hold converse with the Indians between here and the great lakes, and am told that you are such an one," he began, and my heart warmed toward him, more because of his manner of speaking, than for the words of flattery.

"The commands of the governor will be obeyed by me," I said, when he paused as if for reply.

"But I seek one who will go because of the service he may render the colony," he added, speaking sharply and eying me closely.

"How far toward the mountains do you count on going?" I asked, and he said with more of vinegar than sugar in his speech:

"I have failed of making myself understood, or you are dull of hearing, if it has not been made plain that I intend to speak with the French commandant before my return."

"Have you been told of the difficulties in the path, and that already has one man sent out by the governor returned because of the many dangers encountered?" I asked, determined to try his spirit even though he was two years my senior, and high above me in station.

"Look you, John Davidson," and now the young major spoke in a tone of mingled authority and impatience. "I know full well what lays before him who would cross the mountains now that the French are exciting the Indians against us of this colony, and you may spare your breath with me, to expend it in fanciful stories for those who are eager to listen to such. I need one who can speak the Indian language; but at the same time it would be better to go without an interpreter, than take in my company a man who might be willing to turn back before the task was accomplished."

Then it was I knew the young major was

entitled to the rank which had been conferred upon him, and I said without further parley :

"It will please me right well to travel with a man who, knowing all that is in the path, counts on going ahead. If you are willing to trust me, I will not be the one who first speaks of turning back."

"Very well, I believe you will keep your word. Make ready to leave Williamsburg to-morrow morning. We will find the remainder of our party at Fredericksburg."

It would have pleased me better had the lad decided that we two should go alone, for then would there be the more credit after the mission had been performed, as I believed it would be since conversing with him ; but it was not for me to make even so much as a suggestion to my commander, and I held my peace.

Then it was, he took me by the hand as if we had been equals, and I said to myself, that whatsoever the peril, the lad would find me close by his side, and he should not be overcome until after I was dead or had been made prisoner.

It appeared much as if the governor had set his heart upon the success of our mission, for even while I was making ready for what I knew full well would be a long journey, though all the

dangers and difficulties had been smoothed out of our path, word was brought that his excellency would speak with me.

I had been inside the government house many times since Governor Dinwiddie ruled the colony, therefore it did not abash me to force my way through the throng of people which could ever be found in and about the building during the hours of daylight. There were black slaves who would remain in bondage while they lived ; indentured servants who looked forward to being their own masters after they had paid by service the cost of bringing them from England, together with a fair profit to the master of the ship or the trader who made the venture ; and a sprinkling of vagabond Indians who came into town with the hope of wheedling gifts from the citizens.

All these might be found near about the government house, and when one had forced a passage into the main hall which led to the council chamber of his excellency, then was it necessary to satisfy this soldier or that officer as to the right of entrance ; but I was known at the house of the governor, therefore but short time was required in order to let it be understood that I had answered the summons.

His excellency might have spared himself the trouble of sending for me, since he had done so simply in order to urge that I make every effort to bring the enterprise to a successful conclusion.

Such words were but the wasting of breath, for I would do more to aid the major because in him I saw a brave man, than if the governor of Virginia had commanded me in the name of the king, threatening direst punishment in case of failure.

However, I spoke his excellency most respectfully, as one in my station should have done, and promised all he required, although such pledge was not needed, for if the major and I lived, we would go through to the headquarters of the French commandant, and in event of coming to our death that side of Fort Le Boeuf, I would surely be absolved of my promise.

The governor gave me twenty shillings that I might add to my outfit if necessary, and also handed me an order to the officer in charge of the magazine, directing him to supply me with as much powder and as many balls as I might require.

When I had procured the ammunition, shaped a new pair of moccasins to my feet, and begged

a few spare flints from the captain of the governor's guard, my preparations for the journey had been made, and I laid down to sleep even though it was yet early in the afternoon, for he who takes advantage of every opportunity to rest his body is better fitted for the hardships to be encountered.

The light of a new day was yet pale in the eastern sky when a black slave came to my quarters with the word that Major Washington was waiting for me in front of the college, and, stopping only long enough to take from the bench a strip of dried meat which I had left there the night previous to serve me as breakfast, I hastened to the rendezvous.

The young officer, mounted on a bay thoroughbred with a fine-looking animal held by a black man near at hand, was eating his morning meal, and to my great surprise it was the same as mine —dried venison.

He, I had been told, belonged to one of the first families in Virginia, and had he been so disposed might have traveled with as much state as the lieutenant-governor himself.

Therefore it was that a sense of satisfaction and content came upon me, as I contrasted this young gentleman with the one I had last served

while trying to perform the same mission with which the major was intrusted. The other representative of the governor had taken breakfast with his excellency, but I had no reason to grumble, having been fed generously in the kitchen of the government house. On that day we did not leave town until nearly noon, and then many of the citizens gathered around to see us set off; but we took good care they did not witness our return.

This time we were beginning the work in proper fashion; a frugal breakfast hurriedly eaten, and a gallop out of town before any one was stirring.

If Major Washington continued to travel in this manner, nothing save death or captivity would prevent our finishing the journey as the governor desired.

The beast which had been provided for me was a good one, as I understood when I felt the play of his sinewy limbs beneath me after we settled down to the stride which was to be held until the horses were in need of a breathing spell.

It was the 31st day of October, in the year of grace 1753.

There is no good reason why I set down every

detail of our journey before we arrived at the border of the wilderness through which it was necessary we should pass, therefore I will content myself by saying that when we came to Fredericksburg, Jacob Van Braam, a Dutchman who had given lessons in fencing to the young major, was engaged as interpreter among the French, and we pushed forward with no more delay than was absolutely necessary for the welfare of the horses.

I was not very partial to Dutchmen, for I never saw one who could be taught to move through the forest with less noise than would be made by a yoke of oxen, and he who travels with such a companion might as well take along a trumpeter to announce his approach.

Master Van Braam was said to be a very worthy gentleman, however, one who could use a rapier as an Indian can a tomahawk, and I came to learn that he might not be depended upon in a fight, while I never saw a man so terribly clumsy among the underbrush.

The Dutchman was outfitted with a horse, as I had been, and he flattered himself that the major intended to compliment him by providing for his use a beast which far surpassed mine in good looks ; but my steed was worth half a dozen like

his, and such fact Master Van Braam understood before we were come to the end of our journey.

We laid about fifteen hours in Fredericksburg, and then set out once more, pressing the horses moderately hard until, at the close of the fourteenth day from Williamsburg, we were come to where Will's Creek empties into the Potomac river,* at which point was a settlement of nine huts occupied chiefly by men who traded with the Indians.

At this place we were hard by the wilderness; we had come to an end of roads and the dwellings of white people, until we were among our enemies, and from this spot, so I said to myself, our Dutchman would prove himself a decided incumbrance.

To travel with such an elephant as was he, in a country where one's life may depend upon silence and watchfulness, was to my mind the most dangerous portion of the enterprise: I feared Master Van Braam more than I did either the savages or the French, for these last we could steal away from, while he we must always have with us if we did our duty.

At this last settlement of English people I learned that the major had no idea of traveling with us interpreters as his only companions, and

* Now Cumberland, in Maryland.

it vexed me that the party should number so many, although I afterward understood that but for these new companions I should of a verity have left my scalp on the wrong side of the mountains.

Major Washington hired two Indian traders—Michael Currin and Thomas McQuire—as guides, and two of their servants—Henry Steward and James Jenkins—to take care of the horses, or perform any labor which might be necessary.

This swelled the number of our party to seven, and even while I mourned because we were so many, Samuel Gist, he who had served the Ohio Company as guide and was now making a plantation between the northwestern ridge of the Alleghanies and the Monongahela river, joined us.

Master Gist had traversed the wilderness as far as the great lakes no less than three times, and because of his familiarity with the country, Major Washington believed it would be no more than prudent to take him with our party.

Thus it was that we struck into the forest a company of eight, all mounted, on the 14th day of November, and from the moment the trees shut out from our view the log huts of the traders, I knew, as did all save the Dutchman, that we must be on the alert it we would save our scalps.

The traders told me, as I have no doubt they had already informed the major, that the French had succeeded full well in their attempts to excite the Indians against the English, and it was because the savages were evidently on the verge of beginning hostilities against the settlers, that these merchants had remained at Will's Creek, instead of hunting in the wilderness to find buyers for their wares.

Master McQuire I had heard of before; had seen him when I was held a captive among the Delawares, and knew that he was spoken of as a man of courage, one who would not be likely to let his fears run away either with his judgment or the opportunity of making a shilling in the way of trade, therefore did I put every confidence in what these men told us, and held myself accordingly.

The Dutch fencing-master, however, could not be persuaded that we were in any real danger so near the settlement, and, in order to prove his courage, I suppose, began to sing loudly when we were full ten miles from the creek, in a most promising place to find an ambuscade.

Major Washington quickly put an end to his howling, however, and it was comical to see Master Van Braam stare at the lad who had once

been his pupil, for I fancy he believed he was privileged to do much as he pleased.

Our young commander was one who could give an order in such a tone as told that it must be obeyed to the letter, or trouble would ensue, and the Dutchman shut his mouth very tightly; but at once fell into a fit of the sulks from which no one made any effort to arouse him, because we needed to have our ears, eyes and wits on the alert every moment if we counted on remaining very long in this world.

It must be understood that at this season of the year the Alleghanies were covered with snow, and our way led directly over them. The streams in the valleys were swollen by the fall rains, and there were many to be crossed by means of rafts, for it was not likely we could find a ford on any of them. The snows of winter would be upon us before we could arrive at the end of our journey however rapidly it might be made, and, above all, stood the ever-present danger from foes, both French and Indian.

When we took up the line of march on leaving the settlement, our leader counted on traveling in advance; but to this the traders and Master Gist openly remonstrated.

It was necessary, so they said, and I knew it to

be true, that much scouting be done, and this work was to be performed by Masters Gist, Currin and McQuire.

The young officer seemed to think some one might question his courage if he did not lead the way ; but he was forced to come into line when Master Gist said flatly that he would turn back at once unless we went on in proper fashion, using much more caution than ever because our enemies were so many in numbers.

When Major Washington reined his horse in order that the three men might ride ahead, he said to me in a low tone :

"I am of the opinion, John Davidson, that we two might have made the journey alone."

"And that same thought has been in my mind, sir, from the moment I learned we were to have company."

"Yet the traders can be of great service," he said half to himself, as if making excuses for adding so many to the party, and I, hoping to put him more at ease, said promptly :

"That we shall need their aid there can be no question ; because of what they can do we will finish our business more quickly ; but I have fears of the Dutchman."

For a moment it was as if he failed to under-

stand me, and then as a smile played over his face, he replied :

"Oh, you mean Van Braam ? He knows little of woodcraft, it is true ; but I fancy he can be made to hold his tongue when it is inclined to wag too freely."

As if to contradict this statement, the Dutchman called loudly to Master Gist, who was hidden from our view by the foliage, and the major was about to utter some word of caution or a reprimand, when Master Currin appeared, riding toward us, saying when within earshot :

"Unless yon idiot puts a stopper on his tongue, we are not like to advance many miles further ! "

At the term "idiot" the Dutchman broke out into a torrent of threats as to what he would do, when our major rode to his side, laying a hand on his bridle rein, and speaking in a low tone.

What he said to check that stream of words so suddenly I know not ; but certain it is that Master Van Braam was so quickly reduced to silence that one would have thought he had been stricken dumb.

It was well that our leader had such a firm command over the Dutchman, for it seemed to me as if the man had hardly more than been quieted and Master Currin disappeared from view, when

we were saluted by a volley of bullets from a thicket hard by, which had evidently escaped the notice of the scouts, and we heard the ear-splitting yell, so familiar to me, of the Delawares.

In the merest fraction of time each member of the party, even including Master Van Braam, had sought shelter behind the nearest tree or the densest clump of bushes.

I searched with my eyes for the enemy, and at the same time something like fear crept into my heart, for if all the Delawares had gone over to the French, then certain it was we would never succeed in making our way across the mountains.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST BLOW.

THE first thought which came into my mind as I spurred my horse within the shelter of a huge pine tree and dismounted, was that Governor Dinwiddie had better reason than he dreamed of for sending out scouts to ascertain the temper of the savages. Of a verity had the French succeeded in exciting them, otherwise we would not have been attacked so near the settlement of the traders, which was not above ten miles distant.

These Indians, whatever their tribe, were far from their homes, and the ambuscade told plainly that they were already on the war-path, unless, as I hoped most fervently, it was only a small party of young men who had ventured forth without the sanction of their elders.

However, I had little time for speculation. It was necessary I do my full share of the work and a little more, if I would win the favor of the major whom I was beginning to admire, and before attempting to creep up on the unseen foe I noted the positions of my companions.

The two traders and Master Gist were somewhere beyond the enemy ; Major Washington was standing behind a thicket of fir, and near him, lying flat upon the ground, was the valiant Dutchman who had evidently dropped from the saddle in terror, giving no heed to his steed. Steward and Jenkins were safely sheltered behind the trees a short distance to the right of where I stood.

Even as I gazed quickly around a bullet chipped off a twig within an inch of my ear, warning me that it might be well to attend to my own business instead of trying to learn how my neighbors were behaving.

Fastening the bridle reins to a small sapling, I began an advance at full length upon the ground, working my body along much as does a snake, and hidden from view, as I supposed, of friend or foe by the underbrush.

That the major was on the alert and knew full well what one who had had experience in battling with Indians might try to do, I understood when he said in a half whisper, speaking in a low tone lest he attract the attention of our enemies to me :

"It is not allowed that one shall take upon himself more of danger than another. We must remain together until it is known what the scouts are doing."

This was neither more nor less than a direct command for me to come back, for by this time I was five or six paces in advance of the leader, and while one might have counted twenty I remained motionless, tempted to disobey, but unwilling to provoke his anger.

While thus halting, as it were, I saw amid the foliage the feathers of an Indian, and in a twinkling had taken deliberate aim.

A shrill cry of pain following the discharge of my gun told that the bullet had found its mark, and I scrambled back quickly, understanding full well that the smoke would serve to show the savages where I had been hidden.

Before I could gain the thicket where my horse had been left, the reports of three muskets rang out in the distance, telling that our scouts were engaged, and as I rose to my feet the waving of the bushes gave proof of the flight of those who had been in ambush.

Now it was I burned to rush forward, for much might be done while the Indians were in flight; but the major remained motionless, and, after what had been said, I felt bound to follow his example.

After a brief interval came the crack of musketry, as if our scouts, having reloaded their

weapons, were in close pursuit, and I so far forgot my station in the intense desire to strike a blow, that I cried to the major :

"Now is the time when we should press forward! We can cut them down as they flee!"

"It will be well first to know if they are really in retreat, or simply trying to draw us into another ambuscade," he replied dryly, and even as he spoke a bullet whistled through the air in its flight toward me, having been sent from the place where I believed lay a dead or wounded Indian.

Had I started in pursuit, as was my inclination, of a verity that unseen foe had compassed my death, and there came into my mind the belief that our young leader knew quite as much, if not more, regarding Indian warfare than did I who had spent so many years among the savages.

Not until we heard the reports of muskets far in the distance did Major Washington give me permission to advance, by saying in a cautious whisper :

"It will be well for us to learn how many may be hid in yonder thicket. If I mistake not, one of the band has been left behind, wounded by your bullet, and it stands us in hand to prevent him from doing mischief. You may creep around to

the left, while I go to the right ; but withhold your fire unless it becomes absolutely necessary to shoot, for honest men do not kill wounded enemies."

As he spoke I looked around in search of the Dutchman, and finally saw him groveling in the earth beneath a small bush that covered no more than one-third of his body. He no longer had any desire to sing or indulge in loud conversation, and then it was I knew him for a coward who would be given to much speaking when no danger was near.

Well, we crept up toward the thicket as the major had said, and very soon I came upon a Delaware whom I knew better than I did any of the people in Williamsburg.

It was Running Deer, a young brave who belonged to the same band that had held me prisoner, and without stopping to think that it was for the major, not me, to speak first, I cried :

"It is Soft Hand who comes, Running Deer," and I gave to myself the name which the Indians had bestowed upon me, hailing him while at a distance lest he should attempt to do me mischief.

"Will you lay down your gun ?"

"Was it Soft Hand who would have killed his

brother?" the Delaware asked, throwing his weapon aside in token of either submission or amity. "Have you joined with the English to fight against those who fed you?"

"I am with my people, Running Deer, and it was you who fired upon us first. You who broke the peace which the Delawares promised to keep with the English of Virginia."

He made no reply, and I went up to him without further thought of concealment, again forgetting that I should have waited for some word from my leader.

Running Deer had been shot through the leg in such manner that he no longer had control over the limb, and I believed some of the muscles had been cut. The wound was bound tightly with the thongs of his moccasins to prevent the blood from flowing, and there was nothing I could do to give relief to the friend whom I had disabled.

By this time Major Washington advanced, and, seeing him, Running Deer looked at me questioningly, whereupon I told him that our party was but entering the wilderness to speak with his people in friendship,

Before he could make reply the young major asked him why the Delawares had taken to the

war-path, and why they began by lying in wait for those who, among all the white people, were the most friendly to his tribe?

I repeated the words, knowing that Running Deer did not understand English speech, and, on my own account, urged that he tell me why he was in war-paint.

At first he turned away his head as if refusing to make reply, and the major said to me:

"Get an answer from him if you can. It will be of great advantage to us if we can learn thus early exactly how the Delawares stand as between the colonists and the French."

There is no need to set down here all which was spoken by Running Deer and myself while I urged him to tell me plainly what his people intended to do if the French persisted in taking possession of the great rivers, for many words passed between us before he decided to trust in me.

Then it was we learned that the principal chief, Half-King, had refused to listen to the promises of the French when they offered guns, powder and lead if the Delawares would join them in driving the English out of the country; but, chief though he was, Half-King could not restrain the younger men of the tribe, the greater

number of whom were eager to render their services to the commandant who agreed to give so much.

According to Running Deer's story, three or four hundred of the Delawares had come out boldly in favor of the French, and he, in company with five others—those whom Master Gist and the traders were pursuing—had set out to gather what knowledge they might concerning the movements of the English.

It appeared that General Legardeur de St. Pierre, the French commandant, was eager to get early information from Williamsburg, and this party of braves had come on much the same errand as ourselves, save that we served different masters.

They had been warned of our approach by the Dutchman's noise, and the ambush was laid on the spur of the moment, instead of being a deliberate plan to destroy us.

Running Deer had told all he knew which was of interest to Major Washington by the time Master Gist and the traders returned with the information that they had killed one of the enemy; but the others had escaped apparently unharmed. Thus we knew that somewhere in our path were four savages burning with a desire to be revenged

upon us for the deaths of their comrades, for they had reason to suppose Running Deer also had been killed.

Instead of smoothing the path before us, we had only made it rougher, and from this time out it would be a running fight until one party or the other was worsted.

While Master Gist and Major Washington were conversing privately a short distance away concerning what the Delaware had told us, the Dutchman and the other two members of our party came up, and immediately Master Van Braam saw that Running Deer was disabled, he grew exceeding brave.

"So this was the villain who tried to kill us!" he cried in his Dutch lingo, drawing a short sword which he carried much as one would a hunting knife, and but for my darting forward swiftly, the Dutchman would have murdered the helpless Indian.

"Be careful what you do, you Dutch interpreter of French!" I cried in a rage as I struck aside his sword with the butt of my gun. "It is not permitted that a coward shall kill a prisoner in cold blood! Put up that knife or I will take it from you!"

I know not whether it was my words or my

actions which enraged Master Van Braam most, but certain it was he fell into a furious passion, and came at me with uplifted weapon, showing by the expression on his face that it would not grieve him to kill me.

As a matter of course I defended myself. It would have been quite simple to knock the knife from his hand ; but in event of my missing the first blow, he would have me at his mercy, therefore I tried the surest plan, which was to level my gun full at his head.

"If you come one pace nearer I will surely kill you, Master Dutchman!" I cried, and at the instant I spoke the major stepped forward to where he could clearly see what was going on.

Master Van Braam was so thoroughly angry by this time that he forgot he was a coward, and came nearer, I venture to say, to showing courage than ever before. He must have understood that I would pull the trigger if he approached a single pace, and knew that I seldom missed my aim, yet he remained with uplifted sword as if trying to decide whether he would not put Running Deer to death regardless of the consequences.

It was at this time, when an incautious word would have provoked bloodshed, that our major

exercised his authority, and a worldly-wise man of eighty could not have done it better than did that almost beardless boy.

"Put up your weapons!" he cried in a low tone, yet one might have heard the words distinctly at a distance of a hundred paces, and it would have been a far braver man than myself who ventured to disobey. "Is there no danger of death here in the wilderness but that you must turn your hands to murder?"

"That half-breed interfered with me," the Dutchman said sulkily, and mine was a difficult task to keep my hands from his throat because of the term he used.

Fortunately I held my peace, instead of aiding Van Braam in fomenting a woman's quarrel, and the major asked me sharply:

"By what right do you pretend to interfere with Master Van Braam's movements? His position in this company is equal to yours, and his years should entitle him to respect from a lad."

"I have no respect for one who would murder a prisoner, however many years he may have lived, sir."

The major turned to the Dutchman with a questioning look on his face; but the coward

made no reply, and I was bold to say, yet careful to speak most respectfully :

"He would have killed Running Deer but that I stopped him, and as to the truth of what I have said, here are the two who saw all."

I turned toward Steward and Jenkins as I spoke, and both nodded as if to say that my words were true.

"Can it be, Master Van Braam, that you would kill a defenseless prisoner?" Major Washington asked severely, and if the Dutchman had had half as much sense as he had stomach, his lips would have remained closed.

"It is a red savage who would have shot us down," he replied as if that was sufficient explanation for such a dastardly deed.

"Soldiers and gentlemen do not *murder* an enemy," the major said in a fine tone of sarcasm. "If John Davidson interfered to prevent you from committing such a crime, then is he to be highly praised."

Running Deer must have understood somewhat of our converse, although he did not understand English, and he leaned forward to take me by the hand as he shot a look at the Dutchman which told that the interpreter of French had one more enemy in the wilderness than had I.

While you might have counted five, Van Braam stood as if about to make some reply to the rebuke, and then he stepped back a few paces, still holding the knife in his hand.

"He is a snake who will strike while you sleep," Running Deer said to me, and I replied with a laugh, for of a verity I did not fear Dutchmen :

"He is welcome to give me the blow if he can catch me off my guard ; but in case he should make the attempt and fail, it would be a sorry moment for him."

There was too much of men's work on hand for our leader to spend time over childish quarrels, and Major Washington called Master Gist forward that they might question Running Deer further.

It goes without saying that I acted as interpreter, and the Delaware, knowing I had just saved his life, was willing to talk more freely than before.

He told us that among the chiefs, Half-King, Jeskakake and White Thunder stood firmest friends to the English of Virginia, believing that they only wished to trade with the Indians, while the French, by building forts and trading posts gave proof of intending to drive the first owners of the soil from their homes. Even at that moment, so he said, those three chiefs had gone to

the French commandant to make complaint, and it was during their absence that the younger braves had started out on the war-path.

Then I, questioning Running Deer on my own account, asked why it was the young braves favored the French, and he said, much as he had before, that it was on account of the presents Commandant de St. Pierre made them, while from Governor Dinwiddie they had not received even the smallest gift.

Well, lest I make a long story out of what should be a short one, it is enough to say that after Major Washington and Master Gist had held another council, during which time the Dutchman sulked in the thicket, the traders held converse one with another, the serving men fed the horses, and I spoke with Running Deer concerning my life among the white people, the journey was resumed ; but at a slow pace.

Before setting out the major bade me tell the Delaware that he should be taken to his own village, if I would give up to him the use of my horse, and by such proposition our leader made a warm friend of one who could be a most bitter enemy.

It can readily be supposed that I gave to the Delaware my place in the saddle while I walked

by his side, for now we moved slowly because of knowing that enemies were near about us.

Masters Currin and McQuire scouted in advance; Master Gist was forward and back as if believing as much danger threatened from the rear as the front, and in this I agreed with him heartily.

The major himself must have had some such idea, for instead of allowing the serving men to bring up the rear, as when we first set out, he rode behind the party, and I was well satisfied that nothing would escape his watchful eye.

I kept my eyes on the Dutchman for a time, believing he was hatching some mischief against me in his mind; but the more I thought of the matter the less did I fear him, for one who had the full use of his limbs might turn about a dozen times while that heavy-headed interpreter was making ready to advance a single pace.

No one save a blind man could have failed to see signs of our enemy on every hand; even though Running Deer had not told us what was afoot, we should have understood the situation thoroughly before the afternoon was well begun.

We pushed steadily ahead until the sun was hardly more than half an hour high in the sky,

and then were we come to a stream, wild and swollen by the melting snow from the mountains, which could not be forded. We had known before setting out from Williamsburg that such barriers would be encountered at that season of the year, and yet my heart grew heavy because we had come upon one so soon, especially at a time when it would not be pleasant to make any very long halt while we had exceeding good reason for believing an enemy was close upon our heels.

It was useless to bewail our fate, however. There was the stream, and it must be crossed if we counted on continuing the journey, therefore the only question to be considered was as to how it might be done the most quickly.

Our major was for building a raft at once, with the hope that we might gain the opposite bank before night was fully come; but to this Master Gist made decided opposition, arguing that it was wisest to make some provision for our safety first, and when day had dawned to set about the raft-building.

To my surprise the major gave way to him after a brief time of hesitation, and all of us were set at work hewing logs which could be used as a stockade during the night, and form a portion of the raft next morning.

Running Deer, after cutting a forked stick to serve as crutch, assisted so far as was possible in the labor, and all worked heartily, save only the Dutchman. He claimed, when Master Gist asked why he was sitting idle while the others were busy, that as interpreter it was not his duty to do this or that which should be allotted to the serving men, and the quick-tempered frontiersman replied hotly :

"We will take good care, Master Van Braam, that when it comes to a scratch with the savages you shall look after your own hide, for we did not join this party for the purpose of saving worthless Dutch lives."

Of a verity the pig-headed interpreter was gathering thorns for himself, and if he kept on at the rate which he had begun, his path would not be an easy one.

It is strange that a man like myself, who has ever considered it a most difficult task to guide a pen, should allow the words to run away with him in such a fashion as this. Instead of keeping straight on with my story, I try to put in every trifling word and act, because as my mind goes back into the past, I forget entirely that I am starving here at Valley Forge, with the red-coats only a few miles away, and again am living in

those days when the French were our enemies instead of pretending friendship, as at present.

Well, we built a makeshift of a stockade before nightfall, and, not daring to make a fire, ate our dried beef contentedly, at least, I did, for we were in far better condition than might have been the case had the Delawares succeeded in surprising us.

I observed during the night that although the Dutchman claimed to have no other duties with the party than that of interpreting French, our major ordered him to perform his share of guard duty, and he did not dare refuse.

Next morning we were taking advantage of the first gray light of dawn to build such a raft as would carry our entire party at one crossing ; but despite all our efforts, it was noon before we were on the opposite bank ready to take up the line of march.

The weather had changed ; the cold was so severe that the swiftly running stream had a thin coating of ice near the shores, and we, wet to the skin, were forced to walk beside the horses or the garments would have frozen to our limbs.

The Indian signs were not as plentiful on the other side of the water-course, and Running Deer told me it was his belief that the Delawares had

given over the idea of harassing us, in order that they might hover around the trading settlement, where booty as well as blood could be found.

Because of the fact that nothing of especial interest occurred during the seven days which followed our crossing of the first stream, I count on passing over that time with but few words concerning the march.

We pressed steadily forward, always in the same order, with the traders scouting in advance and Major Washington bringing up the rear, until we were come to believe that all the enemies to us of Virginia had gone in the opposite direction.

Four times within these seven days were we forced to spend from six to eight hours building a raft in order to transport ourselves and our horses across the swollen streams, and all the while battling against the frost, for the cold was now so great that but for the severe exercise, we might have frozen fingers and toes.

Master Van Braam recovered somewhat from the sulkiness which assailed him when our leader interfered with his gentle sport of murdering a prisoner, and became quite friendly with all the party save Running Deer and myself. To us he would not so much as speak, which caused me

little sorrow, and if by chance he found himself in our vicinity he quickly changed position.

Now and then I saw the Delaware gazing at the pig-headed interpreter of French in a manner which was not pleasing to behold, and I knew full well that if he ever had the opportunity, Running Deer would settle matters to his own satisfaction.

Until the morning of the 22d day of November we had not been inconvenienced by snow; but then the heavy, damp flakes began to fall in token that a storm was close upon us.

When we left Williamsburg it was with the knowledge that snow would be encountered in great volume before our return, and yet I had been hoping against hope that we might escape such a hardship as would be ours when the paths were piled high with the fleecy particles.

Both Master Gist and our major looked troubled when the wind flung against our faces the first evidences of the coming storm, and the traders came back from the advance to urge that we press on with all possible speed.

It was believed that we were within less than twenty miles of the Monongahela river, and the guide, meaning Master Gist, counted on striking it at the point where was located the settlement

of one Master Frazier, an Indian trader, about ten miles above the forks of the Ohio.

Running Deer insisted that I mount my horse, leaving him to make his way as best he might; but to this I would not listen, knowing as I did that even an able-bodied man might find it difficult to perform the journey during a driving snowstorm.

I insisted that he urge the horse at the same pace with the others, while I ran alongside, which was to me no hardship, for I had done the same time and time again while I was held captive by the Delawares.

Major Washington, being in the rear, could make certain that none of us straggled, and the scouts fell back nearer the main body to prevent any possibility of one or the other going astray.

When the pace was first increased I heard Master Gist say to our leader that it seemed positive a small party of Indians were a few miles ahead of us advancing in the same direction; but that he had little fear they would make an attack while the storm was raging so fiercely that one could not distinguish objects twenty paces distant on either hand.

In an hour from the time the first flakes stung our cheeks, the snow was coming steadily down

like a white blanket of wool, dazzling one's eyes by the wavering sheen, and confusing the senses unless the traveler fought continually against it.

Now it was that our major and the traders displayed their knowledge of woodcraft; unless one had had experience in such situations, it would have been well-nigh impossible to hold the course without considerable deviation, and yet, so far as I could see, we kept our way true as the flight of an arrow.

When two hours had passed the horses grew leg weary, for the ground was covered to the depth of two inches with the clinging white particles that gathered in huge balls on their feet, causing them to stumble over the rougher places until it seemed certain some of our company would be thrown from their saddles.

"Use care," I said in a low tone to Running Deer. "A fall would work you serious mischief just now when the wound is not yet fully healed."

"There may be worse mischief afoot than was made by a bullet in a Delaware's flesh," he said in a tone which caused me to look up at him in sudden alarm.

I knew he had some good reason for thus speaking, and searched here and there with my eyes,

wondering what the Indian had seen which escaped the eyes of the scouts.

A moment later I saw a freshly broken twig, beneath which I fancied the snow had been brushed over with a branch to hide something, and it was easy to guess the rest.

"Are they Delawares?" I asked in a whisper, and Running Deer shook his head.

"Tightwees," he said after a short pause, and although I could not say why he was thus able to give the name of the tribe, I had no doubt but that he had spoken the truth.

The tribe of Tightwees, whom some of the white people believe were originally Ottawas, were the most powerful of any west of Virginia, and well known as friends of the French. If they were near at hand it boded no good for us, and unless we could gain Master Frazier's settlement before the coming of night, there were many chances that some of us might never see it.

I was on the point of falling back to acquaint our major with what the Delaware had said, when Master Gist, looking worried and perplexed, came in.

It was useless for me to make any effort at catching his eye, for he rode up to Major Washington at once, spoke a few words in a low tone,

and immediately afterward came the sharp command from our leader :

"Halt ! Seek shelter, and look well about you !"

The Dutchman was the only member of the party who did not understand that some grave danger threatened, and instead of obeying he rode forward, coming to a very sudden stop an instant later when Master Currin, running back at full speed, seized his horse by the bridle rein, flinging him upon his haunches with such force that the interpreter of French was thrown violently upon the ground, where he lay dazed but loud-voiced with his threats, while the remainder of our company sought shelter without loss of time.

## CHAPTER III.

### A SKIRMISH.

THE fact that they had been discovered prevented the Indians from making an immediate attack, because they knew full well that our company would be prepared for them, and thus it was we had fair opportunity to take steps for defense.

The valiant Dutchman, however, was so thick-headed that nothing save the actual attack could convince him of danger, and, while yet lying prostrate upon the ground clutching at the bridle-rein of his horse, he reproached Master Gist and the traders for being rank cowards.

I expected to see the major take him in hand without loss of time; but the young officer left him severely alone, and I laughed to think of the picture he would present if the savages made a sudden on-rush.

But for the fact that the snow was falling heavily, our leader would not have been so deeply concerned regarding our situation, for of a verity we eight, with Running Deer—the Dutchman

could not be numbered among those who would make a defense—should be able to hold in check half an hundred Indians whether they were Tightwees or Ottawas.

As it was, however, if the enemy held us an hour or more in this position, we might not be able to reach the Frazier settlement that night.

When we had gained a shelter the serving men took charge of the horses, leading them into a thicket just in the rear, where they were fastened heads and tails to guard against the possibility of a stampede, and Van Braam's steed was among the rest, for the interpreter made no attempt at resistance when Jenkins pulled the bridle-reins from his grasp.

Once we were in the position I have described, Masters Gist and McQuire crept cautiously in advance while our major scouted to the right and the left, much to the displeasure of the traders, who held that the commander of the party should not expose himself to danger unnecessarily.

By the time so much had been done the Dutchman began to have an inkling that matters were not quite as pleasant as they might be, and he crawled beneath a clump of bushes, the most useless piece of lumber that was ever carried into the wilderness.

When ten minutes had passed the scouts came in, and Master Gist advanced directly to where I was stationed, saying in a whisper as he approached:

"You and I should be able to manage this matter, lad. Unless we can drive the redskins off in short order, we're like to spend the night in the snow with a sorry chance for rest. Are you of the mind to force the battle in my company?"

"That I am, for it is not to my liking, this skulking in camp, as it were, while others are doing the work."

"Then come with me. The remainder of the party will stay here to protect our retreat in case we are forced to fall back."

Then it was that I made bold to suggest an addition to our force of two.

"If those savages really be a band of Tightwees, then of a verity would Running Deer thank us for an opportunity to pay off some old scores."

"But can we trust him?" Master Gist asked, and I understood by the tone of his voice that he would be glad of the Indian's aid.

"If he passes his word I'll trust him with my life," I replied, and, seeing the Delaware gazing at us earnestly from his post, I beckoned him to join us.

His face lighted up with joy when I explained the situation, and asked if he would go with us to provoke an attack.

He replied by putting his hand in mine, white-man fashion, and I knew it was the same as if he had pledged himself to us in so many words.

We crept cautiously out into the whirling, dazzling snow, taking good heed as to the points of the compass lest it might be difficult to find our comrades again, and when we were lost to view of the others, Running Deer motioned to me that he would take the lead.

He had with him his gun, for we had allowed him to keep the weapon after I was satisfied that he would not attempt to play us a trick, and when Master Gist was willing to yield to him the post of honor, Running Deer wormed his way through the snow-laden foliage without disturbing a single leaf.

He vanished from our view as a shadow fades away, and we followed when he was perhaps twenty paces in advance.

I have taken part in many ventures when my life would have paid the forfeit for the slightest mistake ; but at no time have I felt as much fear as when we made our way slowly amid that blinding cloud, unable to distinguish objects

twenty paces distant, and expecting each instant to hear the report of an Indian's gun, or feel the sharp twinge of a bullet.

There seemed to be something unnatural in the silence ; the falling flakes muffled the ordinary noises of the forest, and lent a ghostly aspect to the surroundings.

Master Gist and I advanced within touch, keeping thus close lest we should be confused by the swiftly falling particles, and wander so far from each other that it might not be possible to readily come together again.

Then suddenly, sounding dull and muffled as if the weapon had been enveloped in wool, came the report of a musket, and thus knowing that Running Deer had begun or provoked an attack, I felt a sensation of deepest relief, for the suspense had become more trying than the most imminent danger would have been.

We strained our eyes in the vain hope of penetrating with the vision that veil of fleecy whiteness, while one might have counted twenty, and then Running Deer came swiftly back toward us, and because he made no effort to move silently we knew full well the Tightwees were in pursuit.

He opened and closed his hand five times as he

joined us, and we understood that our enemies numbered five and twenty.

"Ask if he brought down his man?" Master Gist said to me; but before I could obey Running Deer had fired again, and but a short distance in advance of us might be distinguished dark, flitting forms amid the whirling snow, telling that the savages were upon us.

Master Gist and I discharged our muskets almost at the same instant; but only one of the enemy fell, and then we three sought shelter behind the nearest trees, for it was our purpose to hold them in check as long as possible, believing our major would, on hearing the firing, come up in the rear of the band.

The reports of our weapons had not yet died away when the shadowy figures disappeared as suddenly as they had come, and we knew that the Tightwees had also taken to shelter.

"At this rate we are like to be kept here till nightfall," I whispered to Master Gist, who was standing within half a dozen paces of me. "Those fellows can hold us at their pleasure, if it so be they are not too careless, and I have never yet seen a redskin who would needlessly expose himself."

"If young Washington has the proper stuff in

him, they will soon be forced to make a move," he replied as he sighted his weapon. "We'll fire now and again whether we can see the savages or not, in order that he may get a good idea of where we are stationed."

As he spoke the flame leaped out from the muzzle of his gun, and a second later I saw the form of a skulking Indian fair before me.

That time I made no mistake in aim, and the Tightwee went down with a yell that should have given to those in the rear a fair knowledge of our whereabouts.

Thus it was until ten minutes had passed ; we fired at brief intervals, wasting good powder and ball, while the enemy remained closely screened by the trees, and then came that for which we had been hoping.

A volley of musketry some distance in advance of us ; a chorus of yells ; the din of a war-whoop which told plainly that we had before us a band of Tightwees, and then a scattering fire, as if the enemy, bewildered by the sudden attack, had fired at random.

Major Washington had not disappointed us, and now, unquestionably, he was expecting us to second his movements.

"Tell the Delaware to make the rush with

us," Master Gist said hurriedly to me, and I had no sooner repeated the words to Running Deer than the old frontiersman dashed forward with a whoop which we echoed until one would have said that our party numbered a full dozen.

High above the yells of Master Gist and myself rang out the shrill war-whoop of the Delawares, and if the Tightwees distinguished this, as they must have done, it caused them to believe their old enemies were close behind.

It is not possible for me to set down all that occurred when we literally charged upon Indians who were sheltered by the trees.

Had it not been for the falling snow they might have picked us off to a man, for we exposed ourselves without any particular heed to the danger; but the fleecy downpour obstructed the view, and the waving lines of white distracted one's aim.

Of what happened during this small battle when white men set their courage against the cunning of the savages, I can describe only that which concerned myself, for after we started the rapid, forward movement I ceased to think of anything save the necessity of dislodging this foe who stood between us and the settlement which it was important we should gain before nightfall.

At first I could see nothing, for the very good reason that the foremost of the Indians fell back before us, and then, after a short time, it was possible to distinguish forms behind tree or bush, when at such I fired as rapidly as my piece could be reloaded.

It was as if everything before my eyes was of a crimson hue; I burned with the desire to take life, and counted my own as of little value so that I might strike down one or more of the savages. I have since come to understand that the fever of battle was upon me, when self is forgotten in the thirst for human blood.

Nor did I recover from this delirium sufficiently to feel fear when we were come to a hand to hand struggle, as we did before the Tightwees could be forced to retreat; but I fought desperately, virtually unconscious of what I did, until the voice of our major awakened me from the dream.

"Halt! It is not our place to pursue further lest we wander so far from the course that night will overtake us before we arrive at the river. Fall back to where the horses were left!"

Master McQuire insisted for a moment that we pursue our advantage until the Tightwees were destroyed; but after Major Washington repeated in a sharp voice his order to fall back, the trader

did not think it safe to venture his opinion further.

At the moment I could not have said whether I had done my duty during the skirmish, or if I had shown myself faint-hearted, because, strange though it may seem to others, I had no absolute knowledge of my own movements; but the words of the major as he came toward me with outstretched hand relieved all doubts, causing a glow of pride to be kindled in my heart.

"You have shown yourself to be a true man, John Davidson, and from this time on if we two part company, it will be your fault."

I should have explained exactly how I felt during the battle, thus proving that I had no right to accept praise; but instead of being truthful I held my peace, save when I thanked the major for his kindly words.

As I now came to know, we had pursued the Tightwees two miles or more from the temporary halting place, where the horses and the Dutchman had been left, Master Van Braam having evinced no desire to take part in the skirmish, and the major led the way back at a swift pace, for the snow was falling so rapidly that the trail would be covered in a very short time.

While we were retracing our steps I asked

James Jenkins, who was marching by my side, to tell me how great a detour the major had made in order to gain the rear of the enemy.

"Faith I can't tell you, lad," he replied with a laugh. "If the work had been left for me to do, we might yet have been floundering in the snow. The downpour confused me, and I couldn't have said whether the savages were to the right or the left of us. It was the major who did the job, and a better man in the forest I never saw; had it been a clear day he could not have shown us a shorter cut. When we knew by the reports of your guns that you had found the Tightwees, he ordered all hands to follow him, and be ready to shoot at the first target that showed itself. We obeyed orders until coming up behind the heathen and then the fight was on."

"And the interpreter of French?" I asked, guessing what the reply would be.

"He was flat on his face behind a tree, and never moved a hair when the word was given. I reckon he's there yet, and it wouldn't hurt my feelings a little bit if the crazy fool was frozen stiff by this time."

We found the Dutchman in the same position as when the major set out with his force, and Master Currin wasted his time by explaining to

the coward that the Tightwees had been beaten back, therefore we were in no immediate danger provided the party pushed forward toward the river at full speed.

The Dutchman did not so much as thank him for the information; but scrambled to his feet with the air of one who has been deeply injured by his comrades.

Running Deer was not with us when we arrived at the halting place, and Master McQuire declared plainly that, in his opinion, the Delaware had given us the slip.

I would not hold my peace when he who had once stood my friend was so wronged. Crippled though he was, Running Deer had promptly offered to aid us against the Tightwees, and did as much, if not more, than any other member of the party to bring about the result, therefore it was folly to charge him with breaking his promise to remain with us until we arrived at his village.

The major seemed to have a suspicion as to why the Indian loitered, as did I, and he said calmly, in order to take the edge from Master McQuire's harsh words.

"He will not delay us many moments, for I fancy his task can be performed quickly, unless those who fled came back to check him."

The traders set about making ready the horses, and before this had been done Running Deer hobbled up, looking wonderfully well pleased, and wearing at his belt several scalp locks which, a short time previous, had decorated the heads of the ancient enemies of his tribe.

Now that it seemed probable the imminent dangers had been removed from our path, the scouts were no longer sent in advance; but the entire party pushed on in close order, bent on making the best speed possible.

Running Deer would have forced me to mount my horse, leaving him to drag his wounded limb through the damp snow; but to this I would not listen, and he mounted, I running alongside while the pace was rapid, or pushing on in advance when the animals were forced down to a walk.

More than once before the afternoon was come near the close, would the traders have called a halt, for each man was pressing forward to the utmost of his endurance; but Major Washington kept us well up to our work, reprimanding him who lagged, and encouraging those who kept the pace.

But for his efforts I venture to say we would not have enjoyed the friendly shelter of Master Frazier's cabin that night, and, perhaps, never;

for there would have been many difficulties in the way after the sun had set, to which we might have succumbed.

As it was, however, the shadows of evening were beginning to gather when we rode up to the small settlement of four huts within a stockade, and warm was the welcome our party received.

When we were seated before the glowing fire which burned in Master Frazier's kitchen, knowing the horses were being cared for by the men of the settlement, and with the appetizing odor of venison as it was being broiled on the coals assailing our nostrils, all hardships were forgotten, until I said to myself that this mission which had appeared so fraught with danger and privations had been pictured in too vivid colors.

Running Deer had no reason to complain of the reception which was given him. Master Frazier, who had ever been on friendly terms with the Delawares, treated him as if his skin was white instead of red, and at once set about caring for his wound with such simples as he had at hand.

The Dutchman held himself aloof from all of us except the major; he took good care, however, to occupy the warmest seat at the fire, having pressed forward with unseemly haste when we entered, that he might gain the coveted spot

before any other could get it, and appeared wholly indifferent to the fact that good manners demanded him to remain standing until our leader had taken his place in front of the cheery blaze.

After supper had been eaten, and all the men of the settlement were gathered to discuss with the major as to the best course to be pursued, I realized that as yet we had not come to the most difficult or most dangerous portion of the journey.

Master Frazier bore testimony to the truth of what Running Deer had already told us. He said that the French were making rapid progress in their efforts to stir up the young braves of all the tribes against the English of Virginia, and that only the commands of the older Indians prevented a general attack upon the colony.

Shingias, the chief sachem of the Delawares, yet remained a firm friend of the colonists, so Master Frazier declared, and while he continued of such mind it was not likely any serious attack upon the settlers would be made. It was also believed that the sachem would do all in his power to prevent the Tightwees, who were already allied with the French, from working us mischief.

This was, in substance, the condition of affairs as he understood the situation among the savages ;

but when the conversation turned upon our journey, he did not speak in such cheery words.

The streams between his settlement and the Forks of the Ohio, ten miles away, could not be forded, and to make rafts sufficiently large to carry the horses would give us well on to a week's work because of the lack of large timber near at hand. If we were not burdened with so much baggage he believed we might succeed in swimming the horses across unless, perchance, the waterways should freeze over, when it would be necessary to wait until the ice was strong enough to bear up under the weight of the animals.

When Master Frazier appeared to be racking his brains in the effort to conjure up new difficulties in our path, I looked to see Major Washington curtly advise him to attend to his own affairs instead of meddling with that which was no concern of his; but our young leader did nothing of the kind.

When the settler was come to an end of his forebodings the young officer bade me ask Running Deer if he knew the country well near-about, and after the Delaware had declared that he could go to the Forks of the Ohio with his eyes blinded, the major asked Master Frazier if he had any plan to propose.

"Take one of my canoes; send your baggage down the river, and the remainder of the party can follow the Indian's guiding. I know him well for an honest Delaware, and it is not greatly to his discredit that he got mixed up with the young men of his tribe in a threat against the colony, for these latter days the French commander has appeared to be more friendly than the governor of Virginia."

The major made no reply to this suggestion and remark; but the remainder of our party, even including the Dutchman, argued for or against dividing the force until words ran high.

Then it was that our leader, wrapping his blanket around him, laid down on the floor to sleep, and after his example the others could do no less than compose themselves for the night according to the capacity of Master Frazier's cabin.

It so chanced that I awakened just before break of day on the next morning, when I saw Major Washington step to the curtain which divided from the main room a sleeping apartment for the host and his wife, and there call softly for Master Frazier to come forth.

The summons was obeyed without loss of time, and the two went into the open air, leaving the

remainder of the party to continue their slumbers to the tune of the Dutchman's snoring.

Half an hour later Master Gist aroused us all, and when I went out of doors I found the snow piled six or eight inches deep in every direction; but the storm had cleared away, with a promise in the sky of fair weather.

The air was not cold enough to make ice, and the Monongahela river was running merrily to join the Ohio. If we were not hampered by the horses, the next stage of the journey could have been made in quick time.

It was idle for me to speculate upon what might be done, as I learned when the major and our host came up from the river bank, for then the former said to Steward and Jenkins as they stood in the chill air stretching their limbs to drive the heaviness of slumber from their eyelids:

"You will load Master Frazier's canoe with all the baggage, and make your way as rapidly as possible to the Forks. If we have not arrived, make yourselves comfortable and wait for us." Then, turning to the other members of our company, he added, "We will mount as soon as our good host has provided us with something to break our fast, for Master Frazier believes the Delaware can guide us by such a route that

we may cover the distance between now and sunset."

The Dutchman had not yet quitted his bed next the fireplace, therefore he was not present to make any complaint, but the remainder of our party obeyed orders without loss of time, for although the major had not treated us with any severity, we understood that he was not one who would countenance anything whatsoever which smacked of insubordination.

An hour later we were in the saddle with Running Deer in advance as guide. I rode Jenkins' horse, leading Steward's, and despite the clogging snow we set off at a sharp trot.

The interpreter of French alone wore a gloomy face. One would have said that he felt personally aggrieved because we were pushing forward on that journey for which he had been hired; but I noticed he took good care not to make any complaint in words.

I heartily disliked the fat, lazy Dutchman, and it is possible that I saw disagreeable traits in him which no other person would have observed.

Concerning this portion of our journey it is enough if I say that we arrived without mishap at the Forks of the Ohio* when the sun was yet

* Where the city of Pittsburg now stands.

an hour high, and then found that we had outstripped the canoes.

Running Deer had done his work well, Under his guidance we had been able to ford one stream, and swim the horses over four others, which last, as a matter of course, necessitated our taking to the water as well; but we managed it without much discomfort by undressing and carrying our garments on the animals' necks.

It was not pleasant to strip off all protection against the biting wind while one stood knee-deep in the snow; but once we were clothed again our skins glowed in a most delightful manner.

Take it all in all, I look back upon that march of twenty miles or more which we took in order to cover half the distance in a straight line, as something pleasant rather than otherwise.

We saw no signs of hostile Indians, nor did we expect to meet with any, for according to Master Frazier the redskins in that immediate vicinity were by no means friendly with the French, unless, indeed, some of the young braves may have been won over by valuable gifts and high sounding promises.

As I have already said, the canoe had not arrived when we dismounted near the bank of the Monongahela, where amid the timber we found

protection against the biting wind which chilled to the very bone him who stood idle five minutes or more.

Steward and Jenkins should have accomplished the passage in far less time than it had taken us to make the detour necessary to avoid the widest portions of the streams, and we could only agree with Master Gist, that they had been delayed at the Frazier settlement, for it was hardly probable the boat had been stopped by the ice.

There was no great profit in speculating upon the causes for the delay. We were bound to remain on the bank of the river during the night, whether the boatmen came or not, and I was right glad when Major Washington gave the word for all hands to set about building a shelter and collecting fuel.

All the party, save the Dutchman, fell to with a will immediately this command had been given, eager to make ready the shelter for we needed exercise to warm our chilled blood; but the interpreter of French appeared decidedly disgruntled because it was expected he would hew logs or drag brush

The major incited us to labor by bearing his portion of the tasks as if he had been especially employed for camp duty; but Van Braam, who

had not even the charity to cover his shivering horse with a sleeping blanket, as the rest of us had done, laid back on his position as interpreter, saying loftily when Master Gist reproached him for remaining idle while all the others were working like beavers :

"I came to interpret French, not to build huts. If the serving men had not been left behind there would be no need of asking officers to do such work."

"Do you consider yourself an officer in this company?" Master Gist asked angrily.

"Surely an interpreter is of as much consequence as a commander, and I stand on my rights."

"But the major himself is bearing a hand with us," the guide said in a tone which should have warned the Dutchman that he was angry to the verge of an explosion.

"It is nothing to me if the major chooses to do the work of a servant," Van Braam replied with a great show of dignity as he threw a camp blanket over his shoulders for protection against the frosty air.

"When the shanty is built I'll attend to your case even though it brings me into a quarrel with the commander!" Master Gist exclaimed as he

turned on his heel, leaving the high and mighty interpreter of French to shiver in his dignity.

"We had better get along without any one who can speak French, than have the Dutch pig with us," Master McQuire said as I passed near by where he was hewing down a tree. "I venture to say we will find some one at General de St. Pierre's quarters who can jabber in English."

Running Deer looked up quickly at the trader, and then gazed toward where Van Braam sat covered with his dignity and a blanket, giving the latter such a glance as told me that if the Delaware remained long in our company the Dutchman might learn that an interpreter is of but little account in the forest save at the very moment when his services are needed.

But for the fear of appearing forward, I would have told the major that I could speak French well enough to carry on such a conversation as I fancied we might have with Monsieur de St. Pierre; but that would have looked as if I was trying to take the Dutchman's office from him, therefore I did not yield to the impulse which had suddenly beset me, and an instant later I was heartily glad I had succeeded in holding my tongue.

Although Van Braam had spoken in a low tone,

it appeared that Major Washington heard all that passed between him and Master Gist, and when it was certain the interpreter did not intend to perform any share of the labor, our commander asked him in a quiet, friendly tone :

"Where do you intend to camp this night, Master Van Braam ?"

"I suppose this is the place you have chosen," the Dutchman replied with a look of surprise.

"You are right, my friend, this is the spot I have selected for the camp of those who are building the shelter ; but we shall have no room for a man who is not willing to do his share of the labor. You will build yourself a hut at some other convenient spot."

The Dutchman's face grew crimson with rage ; he choked like one in a fit, and as soon as it was possible for him to speak, he asked in a tremulous tone :

"Do you mean, Major Washington, to deprive me of my share in that camp, when it shall have been built ?"

"You have no share in what you will not aid in constructing, Master Van Braam, therefore I am depriving you of nothing when I declare that you will camp by yourself, or turn to with the others in building this shelter."

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN ANGRY INTERPRETER.

THE Dutchman glared at the major as if doubting whether his ears had served him correctly, and then looked slowly around upon each member of the company, all of whom had ceased work to stare at the commander and the insubordinate interpreter.

Gaze as he might, it was impossible to see a single friendly glance. From the hour we set out it was as if Van Braam had done his best to be disagreeable to each in turn, and I venture to say there were many others beside myself who hoped he would be obliged to sleep that night without shelter.

Major Washington did not wait to parley with the angry man ; as soon as he had stated the case from his standpoint, he resumed his labors once more, and the rest of us felt forced to follow his example.

I kept a sharp watch over Van Braam out of the corner of my eye, however, and Running

Deer did the same, for both of us burned with curiosity to learn what the fellow would do. It was certain that our leader would hold strictly to the decision made, and unless the Dutchman speedily got about helping us, the opportunity would be lost because of the completion of our camp.

If the weather had not been quite so cold I believe he would have remained where he was until morning, with the hope of causing the leader to feel uncomfortable in mind; but he realized that some sort of a shelter would be necessary during the night, and arose, as I supposed, with the intention of joining in the labor.

Unfortunately for him, if such was his intention, Master Gist saw him advancing, and, thinking to render more easy a surrender by the angry man, said cheerily:

"Lay hold of that sapling, will you, Van Braam, and carry it where McQuire is shaping the shanty?"

The interpreter could no longer control his anger, and, not afraid to say to Master Gist all that was in his mind, he poured out a torrent of abuse, bringing the tirade to a close by shouting:

"This matter shall be made known to the

governor of Virginia! He will be called upon to say whether one of his officers can be thus insulted!"

"How long since you were made an officer of this company?" Master Currin asked with a laugh, and the Dutchman turned quickly upon him, speaking such words in his anger as might have been construed into open insubordination had the commander been so disposed.

I understood from the look on Running Deer's face that he would have given a great deal to be alone a few moments with the interpreter, and, knowing that an Indian seldom forgets an injury, I fancied there would be a vacancy in the position of interpreter of French when the Delaware had finished with him.

The result of the childish outburst was that by the time Van Braam had calmed down sufficiently to be fully sensible of the situation, our shelter was finished, and Master McQuire was building the camp-fire.

If our commander held to his word, the Dutchman would sleep in the open, or set about building a shanty very speedily, and I venture to say that every member of the company was eager to know how the matter would turn.

If the major did not keep the interpreter out

of the camp, after all that had been said, then he might find some difficulty in enforcing obedience from the remainder of his following.

Well, once the camp-fire had been built the traders began cooking the slices of venison we had brought from Master Frazier's, and Van Braam wandered down by the river bank as if thinking it might be a good plan to rid the colony of Virginia of one very disagreeable Dutchman.

When the horses had been cared for, and the animal ridden by the interpreter of French was looked after with the others, under a slight covering of boughs at the rear of the shanty, we were summoned to supper.

Much to my surprise, Van Braam came up promptly as if he owned the entire place.

The major made no sign when the Dutchman attacked the meat, taking to himself quite twice as much as either of the others had ; but immediately the meal was brought to a close our commander said quietly :

"Now that you have been fed, Master Van Braam, you will oblige us by going to your own camp."

"I have none," was the gruff reply.

"And you have no share in this. You will leave us at once."

"Do you count on my freezing to death?"

"I have no doubt but that you will be in danger of frost-bites unless your shanty is properly constructed; but by constantly moving around you can keep up a circulation of blood."

"I claim the right to stay with the remainder of the party, and if you dare force me out from among you, I will make formal complaint to Governor Dinwiddie."

"John Davidson, you and the Delaware will remove Master Van Braam," Major Washington said quietly, speaking in much the same tone as if he had ordered me to throw more wood on the fire, and I was well pleased to repeat the words to Running Deer,

The Indian's face lighted up with satisfaction as he arose, and in another moment we would have flung the Dutchman out into the snow, but that he sprang to his feet as if our touch would defile him.

He turned to speak to the commander, most likely to make more threats; but I laid my hand on his shoulder, and Running Deer was about to do the same, when the angry interpreter ran out, literally mad with rage.

The Delaware looked as I felt, disappointed because we had lost the opportunity of giving the

Dutchman a much needed lesson, and then, wrapping himself in his blanket, he laid down near the entrance as if to keep guard against a return of the insubordinate man.

There was no danger Van Braam would freeze to death; but certain it was he would spend a most uncomfortable night, as indeed he ought after making such an exhibition of himself, and I question if any one among us felt the lightest touch of sympathy for him.

Each in turn, even including the commander, stood watch an hour at a time, and just before daylight, when I was doing my share of the guard duty, the canoe arrived, as I understood by the sound of voices near the river bank.

Running down to the shore I learned that Steward and Jenkins had been delayed because of a leak in the boat, and had not left Master Frazier's settlement until nearly midnight.

After telling the serving men that there was room enough in the camp for them, I went back to the fire, and fancied I saw a dark form stealing toward the river. I believed it was Van Braam, who counted on crawling into the canoe amid the baggage to get a nap before breakfast.

I have used so many words in describing the insubordination of the Dutchman that it is neces-

sary to pass over quickly what I counted on telling in detail.

Van Braam came up from the canoe when the summons to breakfast was heard, and ate his full share of the food in silence. No one spoke to him, and he acted as if he was the only person present.

In order that Steward and Jenkins might gain a little rest after their night's work, we remained in camp until noon. Then, leaving the canoe for Master Frazier to recover at his convenience, the baggage was distributed among the party as when we first set out, and we began the twenty-mile march to Logstown, where Running Deer had told us we would find the chief sachems of the Delaware.

Because of the clinging snow, and the stream where we spent four hours building a raft, no more than eight miles in distance was covered that day, but on the next, which was the twenty-fifth of November, we rode into the settlement about noon, being greeted by an hundred or more dogs, whose yelps and howls brought some of the more curious Delawares out of their tepees.

Now it was that Running Deer played the host, and he did it in what I thought good style, that is to say, as measured from an Indian's standpoint.

He dismounted first, spoke ceremoniously to Major Washington, and then waited until I had interpreted his words, which were much like this :

"The young chief is at home here. All within the encampment is his, and Shingias shall take care that it is so. Will the young chief wait till I summon those whose right it is to make him welcome?"

Under the major's orders, we remained in the saddle while Running Deer entered one of the tepees, and when he returned there came with him certain chiefs whom I knew well.

First in importance was Shingias himself, then came Jeskakake and White Thunder, followed by several who were strangers to me.

Of a verity they made Running Deer's words good, for Major Washington was treated with as much honor as would have been shown to Governor Dinwiddie, and perhaps there was a trifle more ceremony than might have been shown the chief magistrate of Virginia, for he who introduced the party made much of the fact that we had saved the life of a Delaware.

All this was very pleasing, so far as we were concerned ; but the Dutchman might have been considerably disturbed in mind had he heard some

of the remarks which came to my ears. Because he was in the company of the major, no indignity was shown him; but Jeskakake, who was a brother to Running Deer's father, said boldly that he hoped to meet the "fat man again when he had none to throw their cloaks over him."

Well, we entered Shingias' tepee, and there, where the principal men of the village were assembled, smoked the pipe and spoke a great many useless words which the Delawares believed were necessary in order to show proper honor to Running Deer's friends.

Half-King, the sachem whom I believed could best serve the major, had not returned from his visit to the French commandant, where he had gone to demand an explanation of that officer's movements; but it was certain he would return on the following day, and Shingias asked that the major wait until his arrival before entering into the particulars of his mission.

When this much business had been transacted with an unusual amount of ceremony, our party was conducted to a large tepee, and there served with food.

There was nothing to be done until Half-King should arrive, and each of us spent the time as best pleased him. The majority of our people

slept, ate and smoked; but I walked here and there, revisiting scenes which were familiar when I was a captive in the village, and speaking with those whom I had formerly known.

Running Deer was my companion as I thus recalled the unhappy past, and to every one whom we met he told of my having saved his life when the Dutchman would have shot him in cold blood.

All this was to my advantage; but it gathered enemies for the interpreter of French, until I believe it would have been dangerous for him to have ventured into the outskirts of the village, even though he was under the protection of the messenger from the governor of Virginia.

Master Van Braam had not spoken from the hour when he was forced to leave the shanty; he rode, walked and ate with us as we journeyed, but acted all the while like a sulky child, and it appeared as if I was particularly under his displeasure.

Now that we were at Logstown, however, and the Indians scowled upon him alone, he began to think that perhaps one so insignificant as myself might possibly do him a good turn, and at once he became exceedingly friendly.

I knew full well that this sudden outburst of

friendship was caused wholly by his fears, and not because he had just discovered certain good traits in me, therefore I spoke him very curtly until he asked :

"Did you observe that the savages here gaze at me as if I alone of all the company was an enemy?"

"Yes, I have seen something of the kind," I replied carelessly : but finding it difficult to resist the inclination to laugh, for unless the man had been wholly blind he must have seen that his life would not have been worth a pinch of powder if he ventured outside the village.

"Have you heard anything which might indicate why they do not look upon me with the same favor as that displayed for the others of the force?"

"Yes, I have heard a word here and there."

"Will you explain why they are so bitter against me?"

"Ay, that I will, Master Van Braam," I replied readily, determined that he should hear all in the way of disagreeable matters which I could truthfully tell him. "This is Running Deer's home ; his father is one of the chief men of the settlement, and his father's brother is a great sachem. Running Deer is well liked by all his people, and when he told them that you would have shot him—a

Delaware with whom the English are at peace—simply because his skin is red, and while he was maimed and helpless, the entire tribe looked upon you as an enemy."

"Did he tell them that?" He must have done it with the idea of working me a mischief!" the Dutchman exclaimed, as if overcome with surprise that Running Deer should have spoken anything which was not entirely to his credit.

"Did you suppose he would hold his peace? He has said that of all this company you are his only enemy, as is strictly true, Master Van Braam, and had he told the same of me, I would be careful to keep close beside the major while we stay here."

"Why?" he asked, and I was filled with wonderment that any man could be so thick-headed.

"Because there are many braves here in the village who would not hesitate to take your scalp, and it is not surprising that they should be inclined to serve you with the same sauce you would have given Running Deer."

Van Braam gazed at me earnestly a few seconds as if to assure himself I was speaking the truth, and when the facts of his situation finally filtered through his thick skull, the pallor of fear came over his face. Like the coward that he was he

tried to lessen the danger in his own mind, by declaring that I had spoken falsely,

"You will be very careful, Master Dutchman, how you accuse me of lying, or I may take into my own hands, regardless of the major's authority over me, the work of making you over into a civil being. If, however, there is any doubt in your mind as to whether I have made too strong a statement, I shall not be angry if you ask one of the traders. They understand the language, and must have heard some of the threats which have been made against you."

This convinced the coward that I had spoken no more than the truth, and he trembled in every limb as he sought shelter in the tepee where Major Washington was sleeping.

We saw nothing more of the cowardly interpreter that day, and on the next, when we white people were gathered in a body to welcome the returning Half-King, he remained very close to the major's side.

Before the newcomer had been in the village half an hour the council-fire was built, and we joined the Delawares in the lodge where was held all important conferences or meetings.

After the pipe had been passed to every person present, Half-King stalked into the middle of the

lodge and told the story of his visit to the French commandant, speaking slowly as if understanding that I would translate it to the major.

"When I entered the fort where was the French governor, he treated me like a slave, and asked what I had come about. Then it was that I said to him these words: 'Father, I am come to tell you your own speeches; what your own mouths have declared. In other days you set a silver basin before us, wherein was the tail of a beaver, and desired all the nations to come and eat of it, to eat in peace and plenty, and not to be enemies with one another. If any one dug up the hatchet, he was to be whipped with the rod you laid down by the side of the basin, and then also you told us that if you should forget your friendship for the Delawares, you were to be whipped with the rod.

"'Father, we kindled a fire a long time ago, at a place called Montreal, where you were to stay, and not come upon our lands. We, the Delawares, ask you to go there now, for this is our land, not yours, and if you stay, the rod is for you. Father, both you and the English are white; the Delawares live in a country between you two, and our land belongs to neither one nor the other, but to the Delawares, and I say to you that it is

time to go to your village. We will keep both you and the English at arm's length; if you refuse to move back from our lands we will take up the rod you laid by the side of the basin in which was the beaver's tail.' "

Half-King paused as he thus finished repeating his speech made to the French commandant, and grunts of approval could be heard from many parts of the lodge. When silence reigned once more, he went on with his recital:

"When I was done the French governor said, as if he mocked the Delawares: 'Now, my child, I have heard your speech; you spoke first, but it is my time to speak now. Where is my wampum that you took away, with the marks of the towns on it? This wampum I do not know which you have driven me off the land with; but you need not put yourself to the trouble of speaking, for I will not hear you. I am not afraid of flies nor mosquitoes, for Indians are such as those; I tell you that down the river I will go, and build upon it according to my command. If the river is blocked up, I have forces sufficient to burst it open, and tread under my feet all that stand in opposition, together with their alliances; for my force is as the sand upon the sea-shore, therefore here is your wampum; I fling it to you. Child,

you talk foolishly ; you say this land belongs to you, but there is not the black of my nail yours. I saw the land sooner than you did, before the Shannoahs and you were at war. It is my land and I will have it, let who will stand up for, or say against it. I will buy and sell with the English. If people will be ruled by me, they may expect kindness, but not else.' These, Delawares, were the words spoken by the Frenchman, and now let us hear what the English would say."

He motioned with his hand toward Major Washington, and the latter stood up, whispering to me as he did so :

"You will interpret carefully, and with due weight to the meaning, all I have to say. If I speak too quickly, let me know, and the words shall come more slowly."

Then he turned toward Shingias, speaking clearly, and waiting from time to time until certain I had repeated in Delaware the English words :

"Brothers, I have met you here in council by order of your brother, the governor of Virginia, to acquaint you that I am sent with all possible despatch to visit and deliver a letter to the French commandant, a letter of very great importance to your brothers the English, and I dare say to you, their friends and allies. I was desired, brothers,

by your brother the governor, to call upon you, the sachems of the nations, to inform you of it, and ask your advice and assistance to proceed by the nearest and best road to the French. You see, brothers, I have gotten thus far on my journey. His excellency likewise desired me to apply to you for some of your young men to conduct and provide provisions for us on our way, and to be a safeguard against those French Indians who have taken up the hatchet against us. I have spoken thus particularly to you, brothers, because his excellency treats you as good friends and allies, and holds you in great esteem. To confirm what I have said, I give you this string of wampum."

As he ceased speaking our major drew from beneath his hunting-shirt a large string of those shells which, when passed from one to another, is a token of friendship and alliance.

Shingias took it in silence, and, walking to the opposite side of the lodge, consulted with the other sachems for some time, when once more Half-King advanced to the middle of the open space which served as platform for the speakers.

"My brother," he began solemnly, "to that which our brother the governor has asked of us, we return you this answer. We rely upon you as

brothers ought to do, for, as you say, we are brothers and one people. We shall put our hearts in our hands and speak to our fathers, the French, in answer to the speech they made to me, and you may depend we will try to be your guard. Brother, as you have asked our advice, we hope you will be ruled by it, and stay till we can provide a company to go with you. The people whom I have ordered in have not yet come, and cannot till the third night from this. We ask you to wait here for them."

Even I, unused to such grave business, understood that it would be near akin to folly for our major to push on alone with his small company, when by waiting he could have a large guard, and the words came to my lips almost before he uttered them.

"I shall follow the advice given by my brothers, the sachems of the Delawares."

With this promise from Major Washington that he would remain at Logstown until the young braves had come in, the council was at an end, and we white men returned to our tepee, Van Braam taking good care to walk very near our commander lest he come to some harm from the owners of the many scowling faces which greeted his gaze.

Now it was that we spent three idle days, and they must have been weary ones to Master Van Braam, for he did not dare put his nose out of the tepee unless in company with the major.

As for myself, I was well pleased at being able to go about this village of Logstown, which was the meeting place for the Six Nations, revisiting the places I knew during my captivity, and holding converse with this brave or that squaw who had been reasonably kind to me when I was the slave of all who chose to claim my services.

Regarding the incident on the bank of the stream when the interpreter of French spent the night out of doors, not a word was spoken by any member of our party so far as I know. Major Washington appeared to think that Master Van Braam had been punished sufficiently for his insubordination, and I can well fancy the Dutchman was of the same opinion.

All our time was not wasted while we awaited the return of the braves. Master Gist called upon me to act as his interpreter while he questioned some of the older Delawares, and by such means was it learned that the nearest French outpost was at the old Indian settlement known as Venango, at the mouth of French creek on the Ohio, about sixty miles north of where we then were.

The commandant was one Captain Joncaire, who had under him thirty men, and the Indians believed he was holding that place until a larger body of French should come down to take possession of the river in various places.

All this was valuable information to us ; but it caused our commander much uneasiness of mind, for he understood that, in order to render our mission of any value to the colonists of Virginia, it was necessary we arrive at Monsieur de St. Pierre's headquarters before any decided move could be made by the enemy, and this taking possession of Venango looked much as if the French were ready to carry their plans into execution without loss of time.

There must have been some such thought in the mind of Shingias, for he sent Running Deer to our major, suggesting as much, and urging that he make the best possible speed once he had set out.

All this had its effect on our commander, and when the third day since our arrival in Logstown had come to an end without witnessing the return of the young braves, Major Washington bade me ask Shingias how much of an escort the Delawares would furnish at once, for it was not his purpose to wait any longer.

As a matter of course a council meeting of the chiefs was necessary before this question could be answered, and it was called that same evening.

The result of the conference was that Half-King, Jeskakake, White Thunder and Running Deer were ordered to serve Governor Dinwiddie's messenger during the journey to the headquarters of the French forces nearabout the great lakes.

Once this was made known to our commander he lost no time in making preparations to continue the march, and the council meeting had not been at an end more than ten minutes when we from Williamsburg received orders to be ready to set out by daybreak on the following morning.

Master Van Braam looked rather down at the mouth when he learned that Running Deer would remain with our party, but Master Gist was well satisfied, as I heard him say to Master McQuire, for, as he explained, it was "his hope the young Delaware would teach the interpreter of French a lesson before our journey had come to an end."

It was the 30th day of November when we set out from Logstown, our company increased to twelve, therefore we need fear only the elements, for we were so strong that any mortal enemy who might have been prowling around that way would not have dared attack us openly, and with such

as we had among us it was positive we could not be taken by surprise.

We were five days covering a distance of sixty miles, for the snow impeded our progress, and much time was spent building rafts on which to cross unfordable streams. Then again our Indians insisted on spending several hours each day hunting, that we might be generously provided with meat, and, take it all in all, we loitered along after the fashion of people who were simply trying to pass away the hours, instead of messengers bent, as we were, on an errand which would admit of no delay if half we had heard concerning the movements of the French was true.

Commandant Joncaire, who was holding Venango, met us in person when we arrived at the settlement, and there was in my mind the suspicion that he had already been warned of our coming.

Now was the time when Master Van Braam had an opportunity to show why he was with the company, and he made more ado about the conversation between our major and the commandant than I would have thought of doing had I been called upon to interpret during one of the great councils, when all the sachems of the Six Nations were present.

As I learned afterward, and was able to guess at somewhat during the interview, Monsieur Joncaire welcomed Major Washington with a profusion of fine words, which were in substance that he was almost overpowered with pleasure because of our visit, and hoped we might stay with him a long while.

When our major explained that his purpose was to have an interview with Monsieur de St. Pierre, Captain Joncaire bowed himself to the ground under weight of promises that he would do all he could toward aiding us, and Master Gist whispered to me while the Frenchman was bowing and scraping :

"He talks too much to be speaking the truth, John Davidson. It stands us in hand to keep our eyes open, for yon grinning jackanapes would not hesitate to play us a scurvy trick if it suited his purpose. Remain close to our Indians, and I will swing around the settlement to see how the land lays. If the Dutchman was a decent man we might get much information through him ; but under all the circumstances it would be worse than useless to let him know we are suspicious."

While Master Gist was speaking to me the French commandant had urged that Major

Washington take shelter in his hut, which was the largest in the settlement, and promised to provide roomy, comfortable quarters for all our party.

And this he did faithfully. Had all of us been French officers we could not have been treated better than by Captain Joncaire. Our major accepted the invitation to share his hut, and I can well fancy his food was as generous in quantity, and as appetizing, as that served to us.

As a matter of course the interpreter of French remained with our commander, therefore we white members of the company messed alone, with no disagreeable companions.

The Indians were given quarters some distance from our hut, and Running Deer described them as being "white-man fashion."

We ate heartily as people should who are provided with the best of everything that can be found in the wilderness, and when supper was finished Master Gist insisted that I hunt up our Indians upon the pretext of delivering an order from the commander.

Now that my stomach was full I no longer felt suspicious of Captain Joncaire; yet I did as Master Gist had suggested, and when I was come to where Running Deer and his companions were

lodged, something very like the cold chill of fear passed up and down my spine.

Captain Joncaire had supplied his red guests with a quantity of liquor, and, setting three or four friendly Tightwees among them to make certain there would be a carousal, had laid the train, as it appeared to me, for much and serious mischief.

Every Indian will drink when he gets the opportunity, and once our allies were under the influence of strong waters, the commandant could persuade them to do his bidding.

The polite captain was plotting harm to those whom he had welcomed so warmly, and of that I was firmly convinced.

## CHAPTER V.

### A FRENCH TRICK.

THAT which I had seen in the hut occupied by the Indians caused me great anxiety, for I knew full well how much mischief might be done if the red men yielded wholly to the temptation Captain Joncaire was placing in their path.

In the hope that I might persuade Running Deer not to touch the liquor, I asked that he come out of doors with me for a moment; but Half-King sternly ordered him to stay where he was, and told me that he would make complaint to the major if I wandered, without sufficient purpose, about the settlement.

I understood by such a threat that the Indians intended to accept the more than doubtful hospitality of Captain Joncaire, and were counting on doing so without the knowledge of our leader, although why they reckoned on inducing Running Deer to follow their example, puzzled me.

As a matter of fact it was none of my business what the Delawares did, and I might be advised to mind my own affairs, if I went to the com-

mander with any story or complaint, for, never mind what Van Braam might claim, an interpreter is no higher in rank than a serving man.

However, I was thoroughly alarmed at the idea that our allies might become intoxicated, and, not able to hit upon any other plan, I went to Master Gist with an account of what I had seen.

The frontiersman was even more disturbed in mind than I, for he understood thoroughly well how much mischief might be done, yet he did not take it upon himself to go to the major with a complaint.

There was in his mind the thought that he might persuade Half-King or his companions to refuse such hospitality as the Frenchman was willing to extend, and bade me go with him as interpreter.

I obeyed without protest, although if he had asked my opinion I could have told him that neither of the three sachems would listen to his remonstrances, if it were possible for them to stupefy themselves with strong waters.

When we were come to the hut I had just visited, the door was barred against all comers; but Master Gist was not content to be thus refused an entrance. He insisted on speaking face to face with Half-King, and called that chief

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again and again by his name until finally I heard Jeskakake order Running Deer to answer our summons.

According to my belief matters had already gone too far for any friendly converse ; but Master Gist, having seen for himself that the Indians were in the midst of what would soon be a regular orgy, counted on being able to check it.

He ordered me to repeat his words slowly, so there would be no question as to their being understood, and then began by explaining why it was the French officer had supplied them with strong drink, at the same time urging that all such indulgences be postponed until the major had had an interview with Monsieur de St. Pierre.

It was good talk he made, if the words had been spoken an hour earlier I believe some benefit might have resulted ; but the Indians were too nearly intoxicated to listen to reason, and before Master Gist had concluded Half-King angrily bade him hold his tongue. He and his companions had come with the messenger from the governor of Virginia, as an especial favor, so the sachem said, not as slaves who could be forced to do this or that, and if the young major counted on forcing them to eat or drink after his own ideas, they would remain with their very good friend, the

French captain, leaving the officer from Williamsburg to make his way toward the great lakes as best he could.

It is folly to waste one's breath on an half-intoxicated Indian, as Master Gist soon came to realize; but he did not give over trying to persuade them to leave the fire-water alone, until White Thunder commanded Running Deer to close and bar the door upon us.

When we were thus shut out from sight of the roysterers, I believed that there was nothing to be done save seek the shelter of our own quarters and there await the result, whatever it might be, with as much of patience as could be called up; but Master Gist, understanding better than did I the depth of this French trick, insisted on having speech with our major at once.

The young officer was with Captain Joncaire, as I have already said, and when the frontiersman and I knocked for admission at the door of the commandant's quarters, we were told by a soldier who stood guard before the entrance, that the officer would not allow himself to be disturbed unless it might be on some business concerning the immediate safety of the post.

Fortunately this soldier spoke fairly good English, else we might not have come to an end of

the matter without the assistance of Master Van Braam.

The frontiersman was not to be hindered in his duty by the rules and regulations of a petty military post such as was Venango, and speedily gave the sentinel to understand that we must speak with Major Washington or there would be serious mischief done.

Of course this was a threat, and to the servant of our host; but at such a time one could not stand on much ceremony, and the upshot of the whole affair was that our commander soon appeared at the door, looking black as a thundercloud until he saw who it was that had summoned him so peremptorily.

Then his face cleared instantly, for he understood that Master Gist was not a man who would have thus disturbed him without very grave reasons.

In the fewest possible words the major was given an account of the situation, and any save a blind man could have seen that he was mightily distressed in mind.

After asking if the orgy had gone so far that it would be useless to try to check it, and being answered in the affirmative, the major said to me sharply, like one who is nervously anxious :

"See to it, Davidson, that you find out all which goes on this night. Make friends with the post Indians, and if it so be you can join Running Deer, so much the better. I must know if any overtures are made the Delawares tending to excite them against the colonists. Report to me by daybreak to-morrow morning."

Then, withdrawing a little as if to prevent me from hearing what was said, the major held a brief conversation with Master Gist, at the conclusion of which the frontiersman beckoned me to follow him as our commander went back to join the treacherous French captain.

I had no stomach for the task set me. Time and time again while I was held a prisoner among the Delawares had I seen the braves engage in a drinking bout, and I knew full well to what lengths they would go when the frenzy of the liquor was upon them. More than once had I been saved from death by one of the squaws, who hid me when the orgy began, and even now, when I was in the company of the governor's messenger, I did not doubt but that Half-King or White Thunder would slay me if I was conveniently at hand when the thirst for blood took possession of them.

Something of this sort I said to Master Gist as

we walked slowly away from headquarters toward the cabin occupied by the Delawares, and I explained at the same time that I was not talking with the hope he might assist me in shirking the duty; but in order that he should understand how much of danger there was in the work which seemed, at first glance, to be so trifling.

"I've got a pretty clear idea of what the Delawares are up to by this time, for I have seen them at a carouse before to-night," Master Gist said in a friendly tone. "At the same time there's nothing for it but to obey orders, and I'm free to say I believe it is of very great importance to our party that you do the business thoroughly. I will stay close by the door of the hut, outside, and if there happens to be any trouble, you should be able to get at me."

He knew as well as did I that if the Indians made an attack upon me I would find it difficult indeed to take any steps toward effecting my own safety, and I understood that he spoke thus, simply in order to hearten me.

Well, I went straight on toward the Indians' quarters, taking good care not to show the fear which was within my heart, and, having come to the door, stood silently by Master Gist's side for an instant to listen.

It was evident, by the sounds which came from the hut, that some of the post Indians were paying a visit, most likely to urge the Delawares, at the proper moment, to make friends with the French, and I knew that all who were speaking had indulged freely in fire-water.

Had I remained there inactive many moments my heart would have grown so timorous that I could not have carried out the task set me by the commander, therefore, in order to save myself from being branded as a coward by the man whom I had learned to respect for his bravery and skill, I sounded the call of the white owl, which was a signal agreed upon by Running Deer and myself many years before, when I believed that all my life would be spent among the Delawares as a slave.

The signal was answered within a few seconds after it was given, as Running Deer opened the door to peer out.

I could see by the reflection of light from the interior that he, like his elders, had been drinking; but my orders had been to join the party, and I set about doing so by saying as I stepped close to his side:

"Would Running Deer and the sachems of the Delawares be alone? Is it forbidden that the

prisoner shall remain with those who were his friends, now that he has been freed?"

"Where are your quarters?" he asked, as if suspecting that my reasons for coming there were not simply that I might be with him.

"At the further end of the settlement. Only the hunters and traders are there, and they do not make talk with one whom they believe so far beneath them as I."

"Where is the Dutchman who speaks French?"

"At Captain Joncaire's quarters with Major Washington."

"That is good," Running Deer said excitedly as he seized me roughly by the shoulder to draw me nearer. "I shall kill the Dutchman before morning. He would have cut me down when I was helpless, and now he shall taste the same fate."

"But how can you do that?" I cried, asking the question more for the purpose of thus giving Master Gist information, than because I was eager at the moment to discuss a murder with the Indian. "He is with the French officer, and you would not be allowed to step your foot inside the cabin."

"You shall soon see how that may be. The

Running Deer seized me roughly by the shoulder to draw me nearer, and said, "I shall kill the Dutchman before morning."

Frenchman will not stand in my way if our people make friends with his nation. One of the Tightwee sachems has promised to take me where the Dutchman will be sleeping."

"Then you have smoked the pipe with your old enemies, those in whose tepees hang the scalps of the Delawares, that you may kill one coward who does not deserve to be cut down by a brave man. Let the squaws finish him."

"Running Deer will speak to him to-night, and after that the Dutchman can never hear another voice. I have not made peace with the Tightwees; but when they offer me the coward who speaks French, I am ready to take him."

As he spoke Running Deer would have drawn me inside the cabin; but I, hoping to give Master Gist yet further information regarding what was afoot, laughingly pulled the young brave toward me.

Now it was that I labored to save the life of Van Braam. He was no friend of mine, and I doubted not but that he would have worked me an injury if the chance came his way, yet I could not stand idly by while the French captain allowed him to be killed in order that the Delawares and the colonists should dig up the hatchet one against another.

But Running Deer had finished his speech, and would say nothing more regarding his plan, closely though I questioned him, and, finally, it became necessary for me to go inside, leaving Master Gist crouching within the shadow of the building.

But that I had been a spectator at such a scene before, I might have thought I had stumbled into a place habited by unearthly beings, and, indeed, I question if men, whether they be red or white, are better than demons when filled with strong drink.

The one room of the cabin was faintly illumined by the glow of burning logs in the huge fireplace of rocks and clay. In the middle of the room stood a rough table whereon were jugs of liquor, with metal drinking cups sufficient in number to provide each person with one.

No less than a dozen Tightwees were hobnobbing with the Delawares, and if Half-King had not partaken too freely of the liquor when they arrived, he would have known they were not there for love of those whom they had fought so many generations.

I could see plainly that those who played the hosts were doing their best to press more liquor upon the sachems, and this I knew would not have

been done save by the express commands of Captain Joncaire himself.

All the Indians were talking loudly, and I observed that whenever the Delawares spoke on other subjects, the Tightwees always brought the conversation back to the Dutchman's attempt to kill Running Deer.

That there would be serious trouble in the settlement before many hours had passed, I knew full well, and it was by no means certain our party would come out of the fight uninjured, although it hardly seemed probable the French captain would go so far as to countenance any serious acts of violence toward the white members of the company, since it surely must provoke war between the colonists of Virginia and those who were erecting forts along the banks of the great rivers.

The orgy had arisen to such a height that I could be of no benefit, so far as reporting proceedings was concerned, for before I should have another opportunity of speaking with Major Washington or Master Gist, the explosion would have come.

Even while this thought was in my mind the mischief was begun. Going to the door, one of the Tightwees offered to show Running Deer a chance

to strike down the Dutchman, even though it should be necessary to enter the commandant's quarters.

Half-King urged the lad forward, and White Thunder declared they would all go with him in order to bear witness of his prowess after the return to their own village.

In an instant the entire party, numbering no less than seventeen, was in motion, and I shuddered as I realized that if Master Gist had not received warning in time to conceal himself, he was at that moment in most serious danger.

I need not have feared that the old frontiersman would be caught wool-gathering at such a time. Following close behind the Indians who escorted Running Deer, I looked in vain for Master Gist, and seeing him not, believed he had gone to warn our major.

So far as I was concerned, it would have been impossible for me to have attempted to run in advance of the would-be murderer without calling down suspicion upon myself, and at such a time the lightest incautious breath might cause a man's death.

Now it was that I gazed around sharply while Running Deer, marching by my side, boasted of what he was about to do, and this I did in order

to be able to say later, if indeed I lived to bear witness, whether the Frenchmen, officers or privates, made any real effort to check the outbreak.

The sentinels or loungers whom we met stepped aside to let the lawless gathering pass, as if such had been their orders, and when we were come even to the door of Captain Joncaire's quarters, the same soldier who had questioned Master Gist's right to enter, moved away to give Half-King and two of the Tightwees who led the party, free passage.

Now it was that Running Deer dashed forward knife in hand ready to do the deed, and wishing to show himself eager to avenge the insult, thus leaving me comparatively alone.

Hurriedly I looked around, trying to decide in which direction the majority of Major Washington's company would be found, when my arm was clutched by one whose face I could not see in the darkness, but I had no fear in following the pressure because of believing that there was in the entire settlement no one, save a member of our own company, who would raise so much as a finger to save my life.

Just as I was led into a log hut which stood within a dozen paces of the captain's quarters,

the Indians rushed into the commandant's house with a whoop and a yell.

The heavy door was closed and barred as I stepped over the threshold, and then I became aware that all our company were assembled here arms in hand, as if awaiting an attack.

And well might we prepare to defend ourselves to the bitter end, even while believing that we had come to Venango only to meet our death, for if Captain Joncaire would sanction an attack upon Van Braam, as he unquestionably had done, there was good reason to believe that, having gone so far, he would not hesitate to finish the job by letting the Tightwees loose upon us.

At such a time it heartened one mightily to speak with our commander. We had in our party men who were accustomed to scenes of danger in every form ; but never one of us appeared so much at ease, so thoroughly prepared for anything that might happen, as did Major Washington.

As I entered he beckoned for me to approach, and when we stood comparatively alone he asked for an account of what I had seen in the quarters of the Delawares.

I replied as best I could, and when my story was come to an end he muttered half to himself :

" So Captain Joncaire does not hesitate to make

an attack upon messengers from the governor of Virginia!"

"It surely must be his doings, sir," I made bold to reply, and then I told him how the sentinels had behaved when the would-be murderers were making their way through the settlement.

The major turned away; but since he had not dismissed me, I remained standing at one end of the room like a simple, and while thus needlessly waiting, heard Master Gist say grimly to Master McQuire:

"I reckon this is our last stand, Tom, for if it so be the treacherous Frenchman turns all his red snakes loose upon us, we're bound to go down."

"Ay, that we are; but we'll leave behind a record so that the people of Venango may tell in years to come how Virginians could die!" Master McQuire replied, looking to his musket to make certain it was ready for use, and at that instant we heard shouts and yells from the direction of the commandant's quarters, betokening that the savages had just discovered the Dutchman's absence.

Van Braam, who was crouching in one corner of the room absolutely livid with fear, trembled like a person in an ague fit when he heard the cries of those who would kill him, and, even

while believing we would soon be fighting desperately with no hope of success, I was curious to know how he had gotten away from Captain Joncaire's entertainment in time to save his worthless life.

It was to Master Gist that I applied for information, and he said with a laugh that had in it little of mirth :

"I reckon you can credit me with that much, if indeed it is any credit to save a miserable coward like the Dutchman. When Running Deer announced so loudly that he was going to kill the interpreter, I knew full well he would never have dared to make such boasts in a French encampment unless with good reason. Therefore I ran with all speed to headquarters, stopping not to ask permission to enter of the sentinel, but pushing him aside as if he had been a fly, and crying out as I was come into the room, 'Will you come to our quarters, Major, you and the interpreter? And come quickly if you would save a man's life!' You see I told no lie there, for it was in fact to save a man's life."

"And did they take the hint?" I asked wondering at the presence of mind displayed by the frontiersman.

"The Dutchman would have been there yet,

if he had been alone ; but our major don't need two kicks to make him understand there's somebody behind him, and he and I literally dragged Van Braam away."

"And what did Captain Joncaire say ?"

"Oh, he was fooled completely. He shouted that we must come directly back, and asked if he could render any assistance. The Dutchman interpreted his words up to that point, and then the major and I had him out of doors. We came straight here as a matter of course. Currin volunteered to go back in search of you, and we're all together, lad, with a good chance of dying in a lump when the ammunition shall have been used up. I reckon we can hold out that long, which is considerable satisfaction when you take time to look at it in the proper light."

By this time the tumult just outside the building was great. Amid the cries and threats of the Indians I could hear voices speaking in French, and I knew enough of the language to understand that the officers were trying to send the Indians back to their quarters.

Judging from such efforts one would say that Captain Joncaire was not willing to go quite so far as to personally aid in the murder of an accredited messenger from Governor Dinwiddie to

General de St. Pierre, and was doing his best to call off the red dogs he had set upon us.

It was not a simple task which he had before him. His people had given strong drink to Tightwee and Delaware alike, and the result was that the village was filled with a howling, drunken gang of savages who thirsted for blood, caring not one whit whether it was French or English, so that they might gratify their lust for killing.

Before the demons learned where we had taken refuge, Captain Joncaire had stationed a file of soldiers around our building, and we knew that the danger was over for the time being.

"The Frenchman was willing to have them kill an interpreter, for that kind of cattle don't amount to very much," Master Gist said with a quizzical glance toward me; "but when it comes to attacking the messenger from the governor of Virginia, and his escort, it is just a shade too strong for his stomach."

These words had no more than been uttered when there was a loud knocking at the door of the hut in which we had taken refuge, and after hesitating while one might have counted ten, Major Washington asked sharply:

"Who's there?"

"Captain Joncaire," came the reply, accompanied with a lot of jargon which I could not understand.

Master Gist literally pulled Van Braam out of the corner, ordering him to interpret the captain's words; but the Dutchman was so nearly paralyzed with terror that he could not even speak.

I made so bold as to tell Master Gist that I could speak French, and interpret it fairly well providing the words were not hurled at me too rapidly, whereupon Major Washington cut me short by bidding me conduct the parley, or whatever it might prove to be, with Captain Joncaire.

It is not necessary that I set down the conversation as it was carried on with a heavy door stoutly barred between the speakers, for the gallant captain said very much more than was needed, and our major bit off his words precious short.

The substance of it was much as follows:

Captain Joncaire was overwhelmed with astonishment because the Tightwees had dared to take part in any outbreak where he was concerned, and he could only account for it on the grounds that the Delawares had enticed them into such wickedness.

Major Washington reminded the captain that

the French sentinels had readily given passage to those who openly avowed their purpose of killing a member of the English party.

Captain Joncaire was overwhelmed with grief because any of his men had been so remiss in their duty. The whole affair was deeply regretted by him, who had exerted himself to such purpose that the short-lived insurrection was crushed, and he prayed that his good friend Major Washington would return to his quarters where the details of the matter could readily be explained in such a manner that the most prejudiced might see he was guiltless.

That Frenchman would have had a precious long job of it trying to wheedle me away from my fortifications after I knew what had been done; but Major Washington appeared to be perfectly satisfied with the explanation.

He ordered me to say that he was much relieved in mind to know that the captain had succeeded in quelling the disturbance, and that he would go at once, with the greatest pleasure, to the commandant's quarters.

Had I dared to make any suggestion to our commander, I should have urged that it was far from safe to trust himself in the clutches of the treacherous Frenchman, and I was surprised that

the remainder of our party held their peace when the major unbarred the door, throwing it wide open as if rejoicing at another glimpse of the bewhiskered, grinning captain.

I was ordered to attend as interpreter of French, for the Dutchman was so thoroughly done up by fear as to be of no use whatsoever in any capacity, and from that hour until past midnight I sat in the captain's house translating soft speeches, when it would have done me solid good to have slapped the false officer's face.

During this last visit of the major's, Captain Joncaire explained, apparently to his own satisfaction, how the outbreak had been brought about, and he was careful to lay nearly all the blame on the Delawares, declaring stoutly that he was firmly convinced the Tightwees would never have ventured upon anything of the kind until after much persuasion.

I grew alternately hot and cold with anger because our major did not call upon me to repeat what I had heard in the quarters assigned the Delawares ; but he sat there like an image, evidently forgetting that I had been sent out to spy, and made as if he believed every word the lying captain uttered.

Not until he rose to take his departure did Major

Washington say anything which might have sounded like distrust of his host, and then it was to remind him that he hoped to receive information of General de St. Pierre's whereabouts at an early hour next morning, for it was his purpose to continue the journey at the earliest possible moment lest the Delawares make more mischief for Captain Joncaire.

The Frenchman professed to be overwhelmed with grief because his "beloved guest" was eager to depart so soon, and urged that it would be impossible to leave Venango within six and thirty hours at the very earliest, since the Indians would not have recovered from their drunkenness before that time. In fact, he spoke more fine words than I ever heard before, and I dare venture to say that never one of them had the truth in it.

The major was quite as polite as his host, and it kept me racking my brain to turn all the soft phrases into French; but I succeeded after a fashion, and came near to trembling with fear when I saw that our commander counted on going through the village without an escort, on his return to our quarters.

Crazy with drink as were all the Indians by this time, it seemed the very height of imprudence, and even Captain Joncaire appeared concerned regard-

ing the danger, for he urged our leader to suffer one of the sentinels to precede him.

If ever a man took his own life in his hands, Major Washington did that night when he refused all the offers made by the Frenchman, and walked slowly down the road to his quarters, I following close behind and expecting each minute to feel the ping of a bullet, or to be stricken down by a hatchet.

Nothing of the kind occurred, however, and when we were safe in the hut which had been assigned to us, I went straight to Master Gist with my story, insisting that our commander did not possess the prudence which every brave man should have in times of extreme danger.

"I'm not certain that I agree with you, lad," the old frontiersman said when I was come to an end of my overly long story. "It is well these Frenchmen should be given to understand that we of Virginia are not easily scared, and by refusing his protection the major has taught him a thing or two, I reckon. According to what you've told me, we seem to be about where we were before the fracas commenced, and I'm thinking there 'll be worse trouble in trying to get away."

"Do you believe the captain would dare to play

any trick now that his first one has been exposed?" I asked in surprise.

"Unless General de St. Pierre is the kind of a man who would countenance open murder, I question if the captain dares send us on our journey lest we get him into hot water with his superior officer by repeating the story of this night's business," Master Gist replied gravely, and now that the matter was presented in such a light, I found much food on which to feed the timorousness that had begun to spring up in my heart when I followed the major down the dark road, knowing full well we were surrounded by enemies.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AT HEADQUARTERS.

MAJOR WASHINGTON did not hold any converse with the members of his company after he and I had returned from the visit to Captain Joncaire's quarters.

It was much as if he had been plunged into a brown study from the moment the Frenchman's door was closed behind us, and, as I looked at the situation, there was good cause for his preoccupation.

I had no further desire to talk after Master Gist suggested that it might be difficult for us to get away from Venango, and I was not the only one, apparently, who preferred to keep a close tongue just at that time.

After the old frontiersman and I held the conversation which I have already set down, he laid himself in front of the door, his blanket wrapped loosely around him so that he might spring up without hindrance at a second's notice, and the others of our party remained silent, wearing that

air which men take on when imminent danger is known to threaten.

There was little need of a sentinel while Master Gist remained across the threshold of the room, and no question was made of standing watch ; but I believe our commander never closed his eyes during that long, weary night, for each time I looked around me, the major was softly pacing the floor at the further end of the cabin, thus giving token that he was consumed with anxiety.

Outside, the drunken Indians were making night hideous with their howls and yells ; but I took note that they remained at a respectful distance from our quarters, which was, to my mind at least, proof that Captain Joncaire had grown more prudent.

The situation was grave indeed. If the French general had given orders that a quarrel be picked with us before we could arrive at his headquarters, then we had good reason for believing that, even though we were allowed to depart in peace from this village, there was little hope of reaching our destination.

In case Captain Joncaire had taken upon himself the responsibility of inciting the Indians against one of our party in order to work us a mischief, then would he strive his utmost to pre-

vent Major Washington from having speech with General de St. Pierre.

View it as you might, there was much to alarm, with nothing reassuring in the situation, and I turned and twisted the matter in my mind until sleep put an end to vain speculations.

Not until a new day had dawned did I awaken to a consciousness of our surroundings, and then, apparently, everything was as calm and tranquil as if we were among our most trusted friends.

Steward and Jenkins served out the rations, and we had hardly more than eaten the meal when a messenger came from Captain Joncaire with the request that our major would do him the honor of breaking fast with him.

To our great surprise the young officer accepted the invitation without hesitation, and Masters Gist and McQuire immediately put on a look of deepest anxiety, for to their minds it was not safe to trust the treacherous Frenchman any further.

As a matter of course neither of the men made any protest against the major's acting upon the dictates of his own judgment; but I knew full well that they would have prevented him from going had he given them opportunity.

The expression on the Dutchman's face when he was ordered to accompany our commander, was

comical in the extreme. He literally trembled, and on the sudden his face went white as if all the blood had left it.

I must give him credit for obeying, however, and when he had ventured forth timidly at the heels of the major, the traders began discussing the situation freely.

After a time, when they had talked much without arriving at any definite conclusion, Master Gist suggested that I make an effort to gain speech with Running Deer, in order to learn in what temper the Indians were now that the orgy was at an end.

I would have felt far safer in the major's company than prowling around the village alone while both the Delawares and the Tightwees were excited by the strong drink they had taken ; but it can well be fancied that I did not let my companions suspect there was anything approaching fear in my heart, and with as much of an assumption of courage as could be called up at a moment's notice, I ventured forth.

It appeared to me as if all the French soldiers in the village were on guard, and I noted that they watched me closely, sometimes acting as if on the point of advising me to remain with my own party, which, as can be imagined, did not

tend to restore confidence in the safety of my task.

But few savages were to be seen outside the buildings, and I finally came opposite the quarters of the Delawares without having been molested, save by an occasional whoop of defiance from some brave who was so far under the influence of liquor as to be virtually helpless.

By a piece of rare good luck I arrived just as Running Deer came out with a gourd in his hand, evidently having been sent for water with which to soothe the parched and burning throats of the three sachems, and I stood upon no ceremony in hailing him.

He looked rather ashamed of himself when his eyes met mine; but since I made no reference to the events of the previous evening, he recovered his ordinary demeanor in a few moments, and we two walked in a most friendly fashion toward the spring.

"How soon before the sachems will be ready to continue the march?" I asked in what I intended should be a careless tone, and he looked up quickly—suspiciously, as it seemed to me.

"Did the governor's messenger send you to ask that question?"

"Not a bit of it." I replied with a laugh. "I

am burning to have done with this traveling through the forest when one is forced to swim so much that his clothing is always frozen stiff."

"We cannot go to-day," he said after a brief pause, without looking at me.

"Why not?"

"The sachems will hold a council with the French captain before we depart."

"To what end?" I asked in surprise.

"The Delawares are not pleased that the Frenchmen come upon their hunting grounds, and he who commands at this post has the power to prevent it."

"Who told you that lie?" I cried, striving to keep back the fear from my face, for in this I saw another trick of Captain Joncaire's to delay us in Venango.

"It is no lie; Half-King has said so."

"When will the council come to an end?"

"Not till to-night."

"Then we are to set out to-morrow morning?"

"If it pleases the sachems; they are not slaves to the governor of Virginia."

"Who has said they were?"

"The French soldiers believe it."

I did not dare hold very much converse with Running Deer until after having had advice

from Master Gist, therefore I said as if it was of little concern to me :

"The French are not the friends of the Delawares, else why do they smoke the pipe with the Tightwees? Two days ago you would have refused to touch the hand of one belonging to that tribe, unless it was to slay him, and yet now you drink and carouse in company."

"White Thunder has said we are brothers until——"

He came to a full stop, and I understood that he had been on the point of divulging some secret.

It would not be wise to let him suppose I was eager to pry into what had been said by the sachems, therefore I turned away, explaining that I must go back to quarters in order to be on hand when our major returned from feasting with Captain Joncaire.

"Is he with the French captain?" Running Deer asked in surprise, thus telling me that the Delawares had believed the hatchet would be soon dug up between the invaders and the colonists.

"Of a verity ; they are good friends still, even though Captain Joncaire gave you permission to kill the Dutchman."

"He knew what the fat coward would have

done to me, and it was but right for him to shut his eyes when I and the sachems went into his tepee searching for the interpreter."

"Come and see me after the council," I called over my shoulder as I hastened away, believing I had learned all Master Gist desired to know, and Running Deer nodded his head to say he would do so.

I had no more than announced to those in our cabin that which had been learned from the Delaware, before Major Washington and the Dutchman returned, neither of them looking very well pleased.

Master Gist, believing I had gained valuable information, repeated my story to the commander, who said curtly :

"I have heard as much from Captain Joncaire. He claims authority from General de St. Pierre to settle disputes between the French and Indians, and will hold a council very shortly."

"Are we to wait quietly here until our enemies have arranged matters to their own liking?" Master Gist made bold to ask, and the major replied with a question :

"In your opinion what should we do?"

"Press on at once. If the Delawares choose to remain behind, leave them. The longer we stay

in this village the slighter are our chances of ever being able to deliver the governor's letter.

"By so doing we would cut ourselves away from the Delawares entirely, allowing the belief that they were looked upon as enemies, and such a step might be fatal to the settlers this side of Frazier's plantation."

"But suppose the Delawares cut away from us?" McQuire asked grimly.

"If we have done all we can to prevent it, then are our skirts clean. I do not believe Half-King will declare against the colonists in favor of the French, unless we give him some good excuse. We must stay until it is certain what the Delawares will do, and then, if necessary, we can cut our way through to the Forks of the Ohio."

It was a brave speech, and, from my experience with him since then, I believe Major Washington would have been ready to try such a desperate venture; but certain it is that four times our number could not have gained the river if the Delawares opposed the passage.

However, we were forced to remain idle, since the commander had so declared; but we knew positively, from what Running Deer had let drop, that Captain Joncaire was our bitter enemy.

The major gave orders for all our company to

remain closely under cover during this day, lest some pretext be made to pick a quarrel with us, and dull work it was, with nothing to relieve the suspense but such glimpses as could be had of the Indians as they assembled in council near by the captain's quarters.

Running Deer did not visit us until late in the day, when the major, in response to a pressing invitation, was taking dinner with the captain, and then the Delaware announced that the council was not come to an end ; but only interrupted until the following morning.

We knew full well that this was but a pretext of the captain's for delaying us yet further ; but since our commander had declared we would remain to the bitter end, there was nothing for us to do but practice patience.

I am allowing myself too many words regarding this portion of my experience if I would come to an end of the story before we leave this graveyard of a Valley Forge, therefore no more shall be set down regarding our anxieties while detained at Venango, save to say that not until the noon of December 7th did Captain Joncaire come to an end of his excuses of holding us back from our journey.

Then it was Half-King himself who forwarded

matters. Once the fumes of liquor were out of his brain he understood that the Frenchman was simply trying to make mischief between the Delawares and the English of Virginia, and such a breach was not to his liking, or in accordance with the instructions he had received from Shingias.

It mattered little to me how the departure was brought about, so that we finally succeeded in leaving Venango, and I looked forward with something like joyful anticipations to the hardships of the journey, because by enduring them we were so soon to part company with Captain Joncaire.

We met with nothing in the way of danger during the four and a half days that were spent in traversing the distance from the outpost to Fort Le Boeuf,* which was situated fifteen miles south of Lake Erie on a branch of French Creek.

It proved a most doleful journey. The snow was falling when we left Venango, and before nightfall it had turned to rain. The trail was crossed and re-crossed by streams over which we managed to swim the horses, and by swamps through which we waded until the animals were so nearly exhausted that more than once did it seem certain we would be obliged to abandon them.

* Now Waterford.

While we were on the march either rain or snow fell incessantly, and at no time did we have an opportunity to dry our garments ; we were literally incased in ice, as if in armor, and I question if one among us escaped having fingers and toes frost-bitten.

The Indians, who were partly responsible for the long delay at Venango, complained bitterly, and Running Deer told me on the second night, when he and I walked around the feeble camp-fire during all the hours of darkness to prevent ourselves from freezing to death, that Jeskakake had declared he would remain with the French until after the winter had gone.

If one of the Delawares decided to stay at Fort Le Boeuf it was certain all would, and I asked myself how it might be possible to make our way back to Williamsburg without these guides.

My forebodings fled in a measure, however, when, on the afternoon of December 11th, we arrived within sight of Fort Le Boeuf, where we knew could be had warmth and rest, however much our enemy the commandant might be.

Not many months ago I saw a copy of the report concerning this fort which Major Washington made to the governor of Virginia, and I set it down here that he who reads may have some

idea of the French headquarters when that nation was striving so earnestly to gain possession of the great rivers.

"It is situated on the south or west fork of French Creek, near the water; and is almost surrounded by the creek, and a small branch of it which forms a kind of island. Four houses compose the sides. The bastions are made of piles driven into the ground, standing more than twelve feet above it, and sharp at the top; with port-holes cut for the cannon, and loop-holes for the small arms to fire through. There are eight six-pound pieces mounted in each bastion, and one piece of four-pound before the gate. In the bastions are a guard-house, chapel, doctor's lodging, and the commander's private store; round which are laid platforms for the cannon and the men to stand on. There are several barracks without the fort, for the soldiers' dwelling, covered, some with bark, and some with boards, made chiefly of logs. There are also several other houses, such as stables, smith's shop, etc. I could get no certain account of the men here; but according to the best judgment I could form, there are an hundred, exclusive of officers, of which there are many. I also gave orders to the people who were with me, to take an exact account of the canoes which were

hauled up to convey the forces down in the spring. This they did, and told fifty of birch bark, and an hundred and seventy of pine ; besides many others which were blocked out in readiness for being made."

At the moment of our arrival I gave no heed to the fort, however ; it was enough for me that once inside I might warm and dry my abused body, and for the moment the fact that we were a party from the governor of Virginia visiting the representative of the French king on an affair of state, was almost entirely forgotten by me. I saw only a company brought to the verge of exhaustion by the hardships endured, and seeking a shelter.

Nothing could have exceeded the warmth of our welcome ; the commandant himself aided our major to alight, and I heard him give orders that all of us should be entertained in the best possible manner.

What comfort there was in the warmth of the glowing fire! How much of satisfaction in the knowledge that at last we were sheltered from the snow, the rain and the wintry blasts !

It is not my purpose to devote many words to our visit to the fort, for of my own knowledge I knew very little of what was done while we remained snug and secure against the elements.

Now that there was nothing to be feared from the Indians, the Dutchman blossomed out in great style as an interpreter, and one would have said his rank was higher than our major's.

As Master Gist told me from time to time, the commandant promised, when Major Washington dined with him that evening, to give immediate attention to the letter from Governor Dinwiddie, and however much his subaltern at Venango had sinned against the laws of hospitality, Monsieur de St. Pierre could not be charged with even the slightest act of discourtesy.

On the day after our arrival a general meeting of the officers belonging to the fort was called, and before them Master Van Braam read the governor's message, while the major explained its meaning as he had been ordered to do.

It appears, so Master Gist told me, that Governor Dinwiddie had written to the effect that the lands lying on the Ohio river belonged to the crown of Great Britain, and expressed his surprise that the French had made any attempt at taking possession of them. The governor asked by whose authority an armed force had crossed the lakes, and urged that General de St. Pierre return to whence he came, quickly and peacefully.

All this the commandant listened to attentively,

and when the Dutchman was come to an end, replied that he had no authority to discuss such matters. He was acting under the instructions of the Marquis Duquesne, governor of Canada, and it was to him that Governor Dinwiddie should have sent the message. It was certain, however, that the request for him to go back could not be complied with, since he must obey the orders given by his superior in office.

This much he said as man to man, addressing Major Washington; but he asked for time in which to prepare, with the assistance of his officers, a proper answer to Governor Dinwiddie, and in the meanwhile we were to consider ourselves honored guests.

As a matter of course there was nothing for us to do save stay where we were, and right glad was I of the opportunity to rest.

We wandered about the fort at will, examining the fortifications and the preparations which were being made for descending the river when spring had come; but the greater portion of the time was spent in front of the well-kept fires.

Not until two days more had passed was the letter from General de St. Pierre ready, and then the snow had begun to fall furiously.

To remain many days longer would be to find

ourselves prisoners until the winter had passed, and while Major Washington and the guides were most eager to depart, all knew that it was in the highest degree dangerous to set out before the surface of the streams and swamps had frozen.

The commandant himself aided us in departing, by suggesting that the serving men be sent on ahead with the horses, while the remainder of our company embark in canoes, making our way by water as far as Venango.

Until this proposition had been made, the Delawares were fully determined to remain at the fort, so Running Deer told me; but when Half-King learned that we must stop at Captain Joncaire's quarters while waiting for the horses, he suddenly became satisfied to set out with us.

The general did everything in his power for our comfort. He stocked the canoes with blankets, provisions, liquors, and would have added a supply of ammunition, but that our major refused to accept so much.

Steward and Jenkins were by no means pleased with that portion of the work mapped out for them, and one could not wonder at their disinclination to make the journey which had so sorely tried the strength and endurance of us all.

I believed that our troubles were over until

the time came when we were to leave Venango bound for Williamsburg, and had no little sympathy for the serving men who were to cross the swamps; but as it proved, we had the greater portion of the hardships, while they made the journey with comparative ease, although at a great expense of horse flesh.

Steward and Jenkins set out four and twenty hours in advance of our departure, and when we were finally on board the canoes, with the Delawares at the paddles, General de St. Pierre gave us a most hearty send-off, with all manner of good wishes for our safe arrival at Williamsburg.

There was in my mind the belief, when we pushed away from the bank, that it was not probable we would be called upon to make more than one camp, for I counted on our arriving at Venango within eight and forty hours at the longest, even though I had been told that, owing to the many turns of the stream, the distance was no less than one hundred and thirty miles.

It was the 16th day of December; the wind swept up the creek with such force that the current availed us but little, inasmuch as constant work at the paddles was required to keep our frail barks on the proper course. In addition to this, the snow sought out every fold of our garments,

stung our faces like so many needles, and filled up the crevices among the cargo until our boats resembled small floating drifts gliding sluggishly on the surface of the water.

Because of the swirling particles of frost which stung one's eyeballs, it was almost impossible to keep a proper look-out, as we learned before the first day's journey was more than half spent.

Master Gist was steering our canoe, and being forced to cover his eyes for an instant, the canoe was run up on a shoal with such force that all attempts to work her off by means of the paddles were unavailing.

There was nothing for it but to go overboard into the icy waters and lift the craft across the shallow, a task which fell to Master McQuire, Running Deer and myself. We were in the water well on to half an hour, and, as might have been expected, our leggins and hunting-shirts were frozen stiff within five minutes after we resumed our stations in the canoe.

The only relief which we could get was to work at the paddles with all our energies, and thus put into circulation the chilled blood; but it can well be fancied that even after this had been done, we were not quite as comfortable as when lounging at the fort in front of a glowing fire.

On that first night it was our misfortune to be overtaken by darkness before having found a suitable camping-place, and the consequence was that we who had been in the water were obliged to walk to and fro until daylight, or stand the chances of freezing to death.

This misfortune was brought about by our coming upon a bend in the river where the floating ice had lodged and frozen solidly together. There was nothing for it but to go ashore and carry the canoes across the land a distance of half a mile or more, and General de St. Pierre had outfitted us so liberally that fully two hours were spent in the task. Then it was so dark that we could do no more than halt where we were, and hunt for wood with which to build a fire.

We could find no fuel save that which was wet, and our camp-fire was hardly large enough to cast a reflection upon the snow where we must make our beds. The canoes were turned bottom up, and under these the greater number of the company huddled; but Major Washington, seeing that some of us must remain without a shelter, insisted on keeping the vigil with Running Deer and me, never once trying to gain repose.

We began the second day's journey half frozen, wet and dispirited, and twice before night came

were we obliged to wade in the icy current, carrying the canoes over shoals or around masses of ice.

To write an account of that terrible journey would simply be to repeat again and again that here we were forced to take to the land, and there to the water, until a record had been made of seven long, weary days full of suffering and what was very like despair.

Not until the afternoon of the 22d of December did we arrive within sight of Venango, and then, despite all the anxiety which had been ours when we were there before, we welcomed our return with shouts of joy.

Steward and Jenkins were standing on the bank of the stream when we landed, having performed the journey in less than three days, and in fairly good condition, save that, so they reported, the horses were crippled and leg-weary until it was a question whether they would be of further service.

Captain Joncaire came to the landing before all the company were ashore, and his greetings were as warm as if we were his best friends.

Even amid my discomfort, and with the desire strong upon me to stand once more in front of a fire, I observed that Jeskakake slyly gave him a

bit of paper, which one might naturally believe had been sent by General de St. Pierre.

My heart sank within me on seeing this, for I said to myself that the message contained our doom. If the French commandant was as well disposed toward us as he had appeared, then all would be well; but if the captain had previously acted under his directions, now was come the time when we must fight our way out of Venango, or remain there while the grass grew over our graves.

However, for the time being I did not give overly much heed to what was of such importance to us; warmth and shelter were needed, and I dare venture to say that from the commander down to the last one of us, all had that in mind above everything else.

We were assigned to the same quarters as on our first visit; the white men of the company in a cabin near Captain Joncaire's house, and the Indians at the other end of the village where the Tightwees had their tepees.

Not until we had thawed ourselves out in front of a glorious fire, and eaten a hearty meal, did we hold much converse one with another; but when it was as if we had come to life once more, and the sufferings of the journey were no more than

a memory, Master Gist called me aside as he asked in a low tone that might be overheard by our companions :

"Did you see Jeskakake greet the captain?"

"I saw him hand the officer what I believed to be a letter."

"Ay, lad, that is what I noted. Those who seemed to be our very good friends have sent instructions as to what shall be done with us, and I'm counting on your learning somewhat regarding it."

"Meaning that I am to go to the Indian quarters?" I asked disconsolately, for the idea of venturing forth into the snow and wind before I had more than got the blood circulating in my veins, was far from being agreeable.

"Exactly that. I am not inclined to croak continually of trouble to our major, and we will get a good idea of the situation before saying anything to him."

"Shall I go now?" I asked, not in the best of humor, and he replied cheerily :

"Take your own time about it, lad, but make certain that we learn to-night what may be expected."

I was about to set off at once, determined to have done with a disagreeable task as quickly as

possible, when the door opened, and to my surprise Running Deer entered.

There was a question in my eyes as I looked at him, and he answered in his own language :

"Half-King had said I could go with him to Captain Joncaire's house ; but when we came to the door a soldier held the muzzle of his gun in my face until I turned away."

"Why does Half-King go to the French captain ?" I asked in surprise. "Is it to complain of his quarters ?"

"The officer sent for him to come secretly ; but the chief believed I might be allowed inside to help him speak the white men's words."

There was no need now for me to go to the Indian's quarters ; if Half-King had been summoned for a private interview, some mischief against us was afoot.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VENANGO.

AND now, lest I be accused of laying too great stress upon what we had good reason to fear would be the position of affairs now we were returned to Venango, let me set down here something concerning the horses which had brought us thus far over the roughest and hardest trail it was ever my misfortune to follow.

Because the grass was covered with snow, they had suffered from lack of food almost from the day we began the journey. It had been possible to get from the traders and Indians a small quantity of corn now and then; but not sufficient to provide them with suitable food for one meal in each day. Their provender had been the dried leaves of the trees, or such herbage as could be found in the swamps where the snow was not piled so high as on the plains, and, because they had been forced to work excessively, the poor brutes were now little better than skeletons.

Steward and Jenkins declared that the animals could not proceed any further until after having

a long time for rest, and proper food; that there was not one who could carry a man from sunrise to sunset at present, and, indeed, the wonder was that the sorry-looking steeds had been able to drag their bones through the swamps from Fort Le Boeuf to Venango.

Therefore I understood that if we left Venango within any reasonable time, it would be on foot, and there was a grave question in my mind as to whether it would be possible to gain Logstown by such method of traveling.

Bearing these facts in mind, one can well fancy that we were not in condition to struggle long against Captain Joncaire, if that worthy gentleman took it into his treacherous head, as now seemed probable, to detain us in order to gain over to his side the Delaware sachems in our company.

Major Washington was pacing to and fro in deep thought at one end of the building when Running Deer came in, and after the Delaware had spoken, I was called upon to repeat in English that which he had told me in his own language.

The major made no comment when I had done so; but, turning to the Dutchman, he said rather more curtly than usual:

"You will accompany me on a visit to Captain Joncaire, Master Van Braam."

He went toward the door as he spoke, much as though time was precious, and Masters Gist and McQuire looked at him anxiously, for it seemed like tempting fate to venture into headquarters at this time, since the French captain would realize, unless he was a stupid, that his scheme had been exposed, and might decide to settle matters off-hand after his own fashion.

However, there was no one to say nay to the commander of our company, and he went out of doors followed by a very disconsolate-looking Dutchman.

Running Deer made himself comfortable before the fire, now that his enemy had gone, and, under Master Gist's instructions, I plied him with questions; but he either could not or would not give us any information of particular value, professing that he knew nothing of what might be in Half-King's mind.

I was in a position to know much concerning the interview with Captain Joncaire, and heard the Dutchman tell Master McQuire what had been said at the beginning, before I was summoned, all of which went far toward lightening the burden

of trouble which hung heavily upon every member of our company,

As a matter of course Half-King was found closeted with the Frenchman, for Major Washington did not wait to be announced ; but insisted on passing the sentinels without ceremony, and came upon the two as they were drinking from the same bottle of rum.

Captain Joncaire put the best face possible on the situation, and boldly announced that it was his purpose to win over the Delawares to the French interests if it could be brought about, and our commander reminded him with no little sternness that it was not a friendly act to make an effort at depriving us of our guides.

To this the officer made no reply, and the major sent at once for me in order that he might question the Delaware.

Running Deer was disgruntled at learning that I was summoned, when he had been forbidden to enter the captain's quarters, and I left him sulking as only an Indian can sulk.

Immediately I entered the room the conversation was begun by our major's asking the Delaware if it was his purpose to leave his good friends, the colonists of Virginia, in order to take sides with the strangers, who were enemies to both

Major Washington did not wait to be announced; but passing the sentinels came upon Half-King and the Frenchman drinking from the same bottle of rum. Page 150.

*When Washington Served the King*

English and Delawares, the proof of which last could be found in the presence at Venango of the Tightwees?

As a matter of course, Captain Joncaire could follow the conversation when I interpreted for the benefit of our major, and he joined in by insisting that I tell Half-King it was the desire of the French to live in amity and peace with all red men.

Major Washington signified that I should act as interpreter for both, and then ensued a three-sided conversation, during the first portion of which the Delaware sachem did a great deal more listening than talking.

Then the two commanders had exhausted their arguments, and the time had come when the Delaware must declare for the one party or the other.

I fully expected to hear him take sides with the French, for Captain Joncaire held out most glowing promises; but to my surprise and delight he remained true to the English of Virginia.

He fumbled under his blanket a moment, and then drew out the wampum which represented the French speech-belt, tendering it to the captain. There was no need of words.

This act was, in the Indian language, a token that all alliance was broken by those who had

passed the belt between them, and Captain Joncaire's face was not pleasant to look upon when he understood that all his fine words had gone for nothing.

He refused to receive the belt, saying that it was his wish to live in friendship with the Delawares, and to trade with them. He was counting on sending presents of great value to Logstown as soon as his messengers could make ready for the journey, and he insisted that Half-King should keep the belt until after that had been done.

To this the Indian agreed; but Captain Joncaire could not make him promise to do more, and, finally, gave over trying to wring a promise from him.

It goes without saying that the interview with Half-King had come to an end, and the sachem so understood it, for he walked gravely out of the hut, looking neither to the right nor the left.

Of course I could have taken my departure at this time, since there was no further opportunity for me to act as interpreter; but the major did not give the word, and I was only too glad to hear the end of the matter, for I naturally expected there would be some sharp words between the two officers.

And in this I had made no mistake. Our major was not afraid to speak his mind at all times, and he now plainly told the French captain that he had not acted in a gentlemanly manner by thus trying to entice away our guides.

Captain Joncaire took fire at this reproach, and for a time I believed that more than words would result; but Major Washington finally said he would take his departure next morning, and the Frenchman smiled as he bowed in assent, for I fancy he was asking himself how it would be possible for us to go under all the circumstances.

Then the Dutchman and I were dismissed by a wave of our commander's hand, he following us without saying more to his host, and, in fact, he had spoken his mind so freely that there was really no need for further words.

It can well be fancied that our company was thrown into a flurry when the major announced that we would resume our journey on the following morning.

By this time the storm which we had endured since the day of leaving Fort Le Boeuf, had taken on yet more fury; the wind held from the northeast, and the rain was freezing as it fell. The frontiersmen were agreed that there

was no hope for fair weather next morning, and repeated this prediction much as if urging it in opposition to the command just given.

"We will set out shortly after daybreak, gentlemen," Major Washington replied, speaking so firmly that the boldest among us did not dare make further objections. "We have obeyed the governor's commands to the extent of delivering our message to General de St. Pierre and receiving his written reply. It would be criminal to delay now in the midst of enemies, and when a heavy snow-storm would block us in here perhaps for many weeks."

"But the horses, Major Washington?" Steward managed to say after some hesitation.

"They shall carry no more than the baggage and provisions. By using all the animals for that purpose, it is possible we may get them through."

"Is the entire company to walk?" the Dutchman asked in a piteous tone.

"We will throw away the saddles lest some of us be tempted to mount," the major said sharply, and then, turning to me, he directed that I go to the Indians' quarters and make known to them the time for departure.

Running Deer had remained in the building

awaiting my departure, and when I went out in obedience to the command, he followed, saying when we were outside :

"The sachems will not go away in the storm."

"Half-King declared to the French captain that he should remain friendly to the colonists of Virginia, and would have given back the speech belt but that Joncaire refused to take it," I replied with a smile of triumph.

The Delaware looked somewhat surprised by this information ; but after a moment's thought added :

"Jeskakake has yet to speak. Half-King is a big chief, but he cannot put words in the mouths of the other sachems."

I gave little heed to this remark, believing that Running Deer was speaking in accordance with his own inclinations, therefore when we were come to the building where the Tightwees were once more giving strong drink to the Delawares, I repeated my message without a doubt as to how it would be received.

Even Half-King appeared disturbed because of the early hour set for departure, and White Thunder asked angrily :

"Does the Englishman believe we are dogs to take to the trail when it cannot be followed ?"

"I have only repeated that which our leader put in my mouth," was all the reply I could make, and then it was that Jeskakake made good Running Deer's prediction.

"Tell the governor's messenger that the Delawares will stay here until the trail is clear."

"We will stay," White Thunder added decidedly, and I looked to see Half-King give his opinion ; but he remained silent.

It was evident that he did not feel sufficiently strong in authority to declare against his companions, and after waiting a few moments to give him an opportunity of speaking, I went out of the building, saying to myself that we were like to remain in Venango yet many days longer.

Major Washington was a young man, hardly more than a lad, but he knew his mind, and the words of the Delawares made little impression upon him.

"We shall set out soon after sunrise," he said when I had delivered the message from the sachems, and the remainder of our company stared at each other in dismay.

"Will you leave the Delawares behind?" Master Gist plucked up courage to ask, and the major soon gave him to understand that he was not minded to let a few Indians ruin his chances

of performing, in due season, the mission with which he had been intrusted.

We were a sorry company as we sat in the log hut before a glowing fire listening to the howling of the wind and realizing that in a few hours we would be exposed to the full fury of the blast, with no hope of finding a comfortable shelter until after arriving at Logstown, or the Frazier settlement.

I ventured to say that Masters Gist, McQuire and Currin were as brave men as ever followed a trail, and yet they looked with fear upon the early departure, if it was possible to read their thoughts by their faces.

There was no attempt to converse one with another. The entire party remained silent, staring at the cheery-looking blaze until each in turn laid down on the floor, wrapped in his blanket for the last night's rest we might enjoy in many a long week.

When morning came it was the major who aroused us, and we set about making ready for the trail in anything rather than an enviable frame of mind.

Steward and Jenkins brought up the sorry-looking horses, who had been without shelter during the night, and even the major himself aided in

the work of packing our belongings on their backs.

The order was given that everything not absolutely necessary was to be left behind, in order to lighten the loads, and Major Washington set the example by casting aside his uniform, and putting on a hunting shirt and leggings which were among our goods to be used as presents for the Indians.

There is no good reason why I should use many words in describing how we went forth into the half-frozen rain that morning.

The horses literally staggered under their packs after we had reduced the burdens to the smallest possible compass ; but our major affected not to see this.

When all was ready he, with Master Gist and myself, marched in advance, the Dutchman following sulkily a short distance in the rear, and immediately behind him, Masters McQuire and Currin. The serving men brought up the rear with the string of horses, not one of which looked as if he could keep his feet until nightfall, and it was evident we would soon lose sight of them entirely unless the pace was set very slow.

Until the last moment I hoped that the Delawares would reconsider their determination and join us. It seemed certain that Half-King and

Running Deer would do so ; but yet no sign of life was to be seen as we passed their quarters. Even Captain Joncaire forgot his manners and remained hidden from view as we left Venango behind us, looking what we really were, the sorriest company that ever plunged into the wilderness.

The rain fell constantly during this first day's journey, and when night came Master Gist whispered to me that, according to his belief, we were no more than eight miles from the settlement.

We set up such a shelter from the wind and rain as was possible, and fully an hour later the serving men came in with the horses. One had fallen exhausted and been left behind, while the others could hardly more than keep their feet.

The sorriest man in all that mournful company was the Dutchman, and although every one of us was in sore trouble, his was worse than ours because he could not, or would not, make the best of the wretched surroundings.

Of a verity there was no need for us to look ahead for misery, since we had before our eyes all that the most dismally inclined could desire, and yet that foolish interpreter of French was ever reaching out into the future, croaking as to what additional suffering the morrow would bring us.

We dozed off at times during the night ; but no

one could really lose himself in slumber, however great his weariness, and when the second day dawned the storm was raging as fiercely as ever.

It should be set down here as something ever to be remembered, that during all that dark, dreadful time our major never seemed to lose courage or cheerfulness. His eye was quick to note when this man or that flagged in the well-nigh hopeless task, and he never missed an opportunity to speak words of cheer. He took upon himself more than a full share of the labor, and ever stepped foremost when some extremely difficult labor or perilous feat was required.

But for Major Washington our company must have turned back while Venango was close behind, and, having done so, would have gone to Fort Le Boeuf as prisoners before the snows of winter had melted sufficiently to admit of our following the trail toward the Virginia colony.

Three long, weary, mournful days passed, and then, according to Master Gist's reckoning, we were no more than twenty-five miles distant from Venango.

The rain had turned to snow, damp and clinging, which formed in great balls on one's feet, thus rendering marching while we were forced to carry our weapons, most painful and slow.

On the night of the third day we had halted where an overhanging rock gave an appearance, but not the reality, of a shelter, and were trying in vain to start the semblance of a fire when the men came up with the horses.

It was as if the beasts had held out in order to gain the poor apology for a camp, for as they were unloaded each dropped in his tracks until not one was left standing. They made no attempt to get food from the snow-laden bushes; it was as if it had become impossible to draw another breath.

There was no need for any one to say that the horses had come to the end of their journey until food could be provided for them. The fact was only too plain to all, and each of us turned his head as if by so doing he might cheat himself a little longer with the belief that the situation was not so desperate as it appeared,

Major Washington was the only member of the company who did not see death staring him in the face; he made as if only the expected had happened, and the remedy already provided.

"By husbanding the strength of the brutes a few days they will be able to advance," he said in a quiet tone.

"How can one do that while they are starving to death?" Steward asked irritably.

"By building a shelter here, and holding over a week or more. You should be able to find forage hidden under the snow, and it will be a matter of only a few days before they can go on."

The rest of us looked up in surprise, and Master Gist said as if speaking to himself:

"Then it is to be a halt, eh?"

"For the drivers, yes," the major said quietly. "The others can go on."

"How?" the Dutchman asked angrily. "There is not one here who can walk a single mile further."

"Now you are speaking for yourself, Master Van Braam, and not in behalf of these brave fellows who have endured suffering and privation so gallantly. Very well, you shall be left to come on with the horses. If Master Gist and John Davidson will follow me, the others may do as they will."

There was nothing in such a proposition to excite enthusiasm, for one knew full well how much of danger lay in the path, yet I sprang to my feet quickly in order that the commander might see I was willing to follow him to the death, and Master Gist laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Very well," the major said with a smile, and one could see that it pleased him because we were

so willing to endure the suffering which must come to those who pushed on without baggage. "We will take no more than enough to keep us alive, and the remainder of the stores shall be left behind. Remember, you who are to stay, that your lives depend upon getting the horses into condition as quickly as may be, and let their care be your one duty."

I looked to see Masters McQuire and Currin declare that they would press forward with us; but neither spoke, and one might guess they believed we courted our death, when no real good could come of thus dying.

The serving men, relieved from the fear of immediately continuing the march, spent nearly all that night building a shelter for the exhausted horses; but we who were to press forward over a trail in which was to be met danger in every form, did our best at getting such repose as was possible when one's bed was the snow and his garments literally frozen to his limbs.

There was little conversation indulged in next morning; no one attempted to dissuade the major from his purpose, and we moved about silently, as people do when death is near at hand.

Each of us who were to continue on the trail had made a knapsack of his blanket, and in this

we packed a small store of food and a limited supply of ammunition.

We were equipped exactly alike, with an absolutely equal division of burden, except that in addition the major carried the papers he had brought away from Fort Le Boeuf. There was not among us one ounce of unnecessary weight.

The commander led the way, simply waving his hand in adieu to those who were left behind, and almost before I was aware that our lonely journey had begun, the small company in the camp of brush was lost to view behind the curtain of falling snow.

Master Gist was of the belief that we were within two days' march of Murdering Town, on the southeast fork of Beaver Creek, and since there it might be possible to add to our scanty store of provisions, we bent our steps in that direction, regardless of the fact that such a course was taking us several miles out of the path we should pursue in order to arrive, by the most direct road, at the Frazier settlement.

The major led the way, I followed him, and Master Gist brought up the rear.

We marched in single file that one might tread in the other's footsteps, and thus two would be spared the labor of breaking the road. By such

order of traveling our commander had the hardest portion of the work; but it could not be otherwise, for he most positively refused to allow either of us to take his place.

During that first mournful day we traveled steadily but slowly, talking little lest we waste breath that would be needed later, and halting not until near to sunset, when we were come to an upturned tree, beneath the roots of which we found a sorry shelter.

We divided our food into rations for four days, lest we should not be able to come upon Murdering Town as had been expected, and the portion allotted for supper was so small that it hardly more than served to show me how hungry I was.

We crouched under the roots of the tree hoping to fall asleep and thus forget for the time being our forlorn condition. There was no thought of standing guard there where neither white man nor Indian would come unless forced to the task as we had been.

The snow turned once more to rain, and before daylight we were nearly drowned out.

It was not yet sunrise when, having eaten the scanty rations, we set off, and I can say as to myself that I walked like one in a dream, hardly

conscious of what I did until suddenly we were overtaken by an Indian of the Tightwee tribe, whom I could have sworn to having seen in Venango.

The fellow appeared exceeding glad to see us, and in the Delaware language asked me when we left Captain Joncaire ; also, why we were thus traveling through the snow when it would be easier to rest in the villages of the white men until winter had gone.

It puzzled me that he should have overtaken us, for one of his tribe would not be on the trail alone in the country of the Delawares, and, in addition to this, he was far too well pleased at having met with us.

The major must have thought he had seen the fellow before, for he bade me ask him why he had left Venango.

I did as was commanded, and the Indian flatly told me he had not been at Venango ; that I never saw him there. In fact, he was so eager to convince me he spoke the truth that I grew more suspicious than ever, and gave English words to my thoughts.

Master Gist was disposed to make light of my fears ; but the major said in the tone of one who is in doubt :

"Keep a sharp watch over him, and it will be our fault if he does us any harm."

As a matter of course the Indian understood that we were talking about him, and gazed at us keenly without discovering anything, so I flattered myself.

Then he asked plumply why we had left the horses behind, and when we expected them to come on, which was enough to prove that he had really seen us at the French outpost.

But for the fact of bringing Master Gist's mirth down upon my head, I would have insisted that we take some steps toward ridding ourselves of the Indian ; I held my peace, however, and the newcomer, in order to prove that he could be of assistance, insisted on taking the major's pack upon his own back.

"I will lead you to Murdering Town," he said to me, understanding that I would repeat the words in English.

"Are you going there?" I asked, watching him intently.

"My people are waiting for me at the village," he replied, gazing at me in turn, and then it was I proved him a liar.

"How long have the Tightwees dwelt in a Delaware village, except as prisoners?" I asked,

and he turned away his head as he muttered sulkily:

"My people are there."

Thus it was I knew him to be other than what he would have us believe, and I promised myself he should not play any trick, for I could keep my eyes open as wide as any Tightwee who ever took French gold in payment for spilling English blood.

He led the way briskly, carrying the major's burden; but when an hour had passed it appeared to me as if we were bearing too much to the northeast, and I mentioned the matter to Master Gist.

"It may be," he replied wearily. "But it wouldn't be surprising if, after all we've been through with, we had made a mistake. Most likely the Indian knows better than either you or I."

Until two hours past noon we kept on still bearing toward the northeast, and then the major was so nearly worn out that he proposed we encamp for the night in a thicket of pine bushes where we might find shelter against the wind, while at the same time we would be able to provide ourselves with fuel.

At this proposition the Indian grew very much excited; he had the brazenness to tell us that his

cabin was no more than two miles away, and by keeping on a short time longer we would find a place where we might rest in comfort.

When I taxed him with having pretended to be on his way to Murdering Town to meet his people, and asked what he meant by saying his cabin was near at hand, the fellow insisted that both stories were true, as we would shortly see.

"I will carry your captain's gun," he said, making as if to take the weapon; but Major Washington not only kept a firm hold upon it, but insisted on taking back his pack, much to my satisfaction.

Then the Indian told me we must hurry, because there were Ottawas near about searching for scalps, and he even pretended to hear their war-whoops.

All the while he kept bearing more and more to the north and east, until I came to a full stop, saying decidedly to Master Gist as I did so:

"We are but bending back toward Venango. I know full well he has been leading us from the course, and who shall say it is not into an ambush that we are going? This fellow is one of Captain Joncaire's men, and we are foolish to let him twist us around his finger."

While I was speaking the Tightwee continued

slowly on, as if to give us an opportunity of speaking privately. I was about to appeal to the major when the report of a musket rang out, dull and muffled because of the falling snow, and a bullet whistled within a few inches of my face.

Instinctively I sprang behind the nearest tree, and as I did so saw a tiny wreath of smoke curling up from a thicket a dozen paces distant.

There was no longer any need for me to waste many words trying to convince Master Gist that the Indian was there to do us harm.

In an instant we were screened from view, each on the alert for a glimpse of the enemy, and then the major said sharply :

"It is not manly to set ourselves three against one. Let the Indian run away if he will ; but we must not kill him, for it would only serve to provoke the Tightwees yet further against the colonists."

"If we spare him, one of us will fall," I replied almost curtly, so irritated was I at the major's refusing to kill an Indian simply because we were three against one. "It is reasonable to believe there are others of his tribe near at hand who have come on Captain Joncaire's work of murdering us !"

Then a second bullet came our way, cutting off a bit of fringe from Master Gist's hunting-shirt, and there could no longer be any question but that we must shoot to kill if we would save our own lives.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TURNING BACK.

THE second bullet caused me more alarm than had the first, and for the very good reason that it had come from a direction opposite where I knew was secreted the Indian who opened the battle. Therefore was it positive that we had more than one enemy with which to contend.

I had no more than discovered this disagreeable fact, when I saw, a short distance away to the right, skulking among the bushes, an Indian with whom I had spoken at Venango, and it was now plain that Captain Joncaire had sent his tools for the purpose of killing the major, if nothing more, although why his death should be especially desired by the French was more than I could figure out.

It was enough for me that we were probably surrounded by enemies who were thirsting for our blood, and I mentally raged at that nice sense of honor in our commander which prevented him

from killing a foe when he was within fair range.

"Careful and steady!" Master Gist said to me in a low tone as if thinking I needed courage, and the words irritated me to such an extent that I replied angrily:

"That caution was needed when the Tightwee first came up. A little care and steadiness then, and our enemies would number less by one at this moment."

"We've trouble enough ahead without looking back for cause of complaint," the frontiersman replied, and straightway my cheeks burned with shame because I had permitted myself to be so childish.

At that instant the major discharged his weapon after taking good aim, and a wild cry told that he had not wasted his bullet.

This opening of the battle served to bring me yet more fully to my senses, and at once I ceased to think of anything save the fact that in order to save my own life I must kill others.

We were on a stretch of low land thickly covered with stunted pines and bushes, and if the Indian had led us off the course, as I believed, it was impossible to say where the trail might be found; but from the surroundings I believed we

were near a water-way, therefore, while keeping a sharp watch for a skulking form, I whispered to Master Gist:

"It seems to me wise that we work forward while trying to hold them in check. There must be a stream or a river near by, and if that could be gained it would not be possible for Captain Joncaire's friends to entirely surround us."

"The idea is a good one," the frontiersman replied, and an instant later I heard him whispering the suggestion to Major Washington.

Fortunately our commander was a man ever ready to listen to the advice of others, although when his mind was once made up I question if it might have been changed easily. In this case he approved of the proposition, and Master Gist passed back the word to me:

"We'll work slowly toward yonder tall pine, and from there select another landmark. Do not be in a hurry, and make certain the bushes in your front do not conceal an enemy."

He might trust me for that, and not make a mistake. I had been too often in the forest depending upon my skill at shooting to save my life, not to understand so much as was contained in his caution.

The major raised his cap on a stick to draw

the fire of our enemies that we might know where they were, and half a dozen reports from the right and the left told that the savages from Venango had not yet surrounded us.

"Now! Run twenty yards, and take to shelter again!" the major cried sharply, and it seemed a good time in which to execute such a maneuver, because it was reasonable to suppose the guns of the Indians had been emptied.

We obeyed the order, and succeeded in covering the distance proposed, despite the depth of snow, without coming to harm; but no sooner had we gained cover than a volley of bullets whistled harmlessly over our heads.

"Once more!" the major cried, leading the way, and a second time did we make a rush, thanks to the stupidity of our foes.

"They won't give us another chance," Master Gist said grimly as we crouched amid the bushes watching for a target. "Now we know exactly where the Tightwees are, and if there is water near at hand we should be able to reach it."

While he was speaking I saw a tuft of feathers moving swiftly from one bush to another, and, firing almost at random, I had the satisfaction of seeing a painted form sprawl forward with outstretched arms, thus showing that this

particular Indian would never again take to the war-path at the bidding of a perfidious Frenchman.

It was a rare piece of good luck for us that the others of the band, enraged by the killing of their comrade, fired a volley in the direction from which had come my shot, and once more the major ordered us to rush forward.

When we had gained a third place of shelter, it was possible to see in the distance a dark line of water or ice, and my heart grew lighter, for once we were on the bank of the stream our chances for life had been increased tenfold.

There is no good reason why I should try to picture in words that running fight, for it did not differ in any way from such as almost every man in the Virginia colony had witnessed more than once.

At one time while the battle was on did our major receive a bullet through the cap, and the sleeve of my hunting-shirt gave token of the Tightwees' skill in shooting ; but no white blood had been shed when two hours were passed, and we knew that not less than three of the Indians were out of the fight, either killed or disabled.

From all we had been able to learn of the enemy, a full half of them were in no condition

to make us trouble, and now we were about equal in numbers. In addition to this success, we were on the bank of a river which Master Gist declared was the Alleghany, with Shannopins a few miles below us.

If we could hold the Indians off until daylight, we might be able to cross, after which there would be little to fear from those whom Captain Joncaire had sent in pursuit of us with his compliments in the shape of bullets.

Unfortunately the water was frozen only a few yards from each bank, and in the middle, where the current ran swiftly, were great masses of broken ice which would speedily have ground a canoe or batteau to splinters.

Except that our straits were so desperate, we might have despaired of being able to gain the other side ; but when men are battling for life ordinary obstacles do not show up as being very formidable—it is the danger of death from behind which spurs one on to deeds that at another time would seem impossible.

While Major Washington and I guarded our front, Master Gist made his way up and down the shore to learn whether we might venture a crossing by swimming, and, failing in this, to select a spot where we could best build a raft.

The Tightwees had seen about as much of us as was necessary to their happiness. Three of our bullets had gone home, and those who were left uninjured took precious good care to keep out of sight.

"If we could bring down one more, the other two would make haste to gain the shelter of Venango," I said to our major as we crouched side by side with guns in hand on the alert for the first movement which would tell of a foe, and he replied with a quiet smile:

"Let us hope that the three who face us will conclude that discretion is the better part of valor, and go quietly away. I do not like to shed blood, even in self-defense, and particularly when those whom we would kill are but the tools of a white man."

The only fault I have ever had to find with the gentleman from Virginia who is now struggling so gallantly for the good of the colonies, has been his reluctance to knock over an Indian when the opportunity occurred. Perhaps if he had been slave to them for many years, as was my sad lot, he would look at the killing of a few in a different light.

Whether they were tools or not, I burned to teach them a yet more severe lesson, and to this

end crept cautiously out from among the bushes in the hope of surprising one.

It came very near being a surprise for me instead of him, for one of the three survivors had evidently taken the same idea into his head as held possession of mine, and we advanced directly toward each other, both believing he only had conceived such a plan.

The first intimation I had that a Tightwee was so near, came when I literally ran headforemost into him, and I fancy that until this instant he had not suspected I was so near.

His gun fell from his hands as he sprang to his feet while I yet lay half stunned on the ground. I am inclined to believe that the blow from my head knocked it out of his grasp, although he may have been so flurried by the unexpected encounter as to lose his wits. At all events, he rose quickly, and grasped the muzzle of my weapon when I would have thrust it upward to fire.

My only chance for life was to seize him, which I did by clasping my arms tightly around his legs, and, with a quick jerk, throw him to the ground.

Neither of us spoke, because each feared to warn the other's companions, and in a death grapple we writhed to and fro in the snow until it seemed to me that we had been an hour struggling for the

mastery without either one gaining an advantage.

My strength began to fail me; I felt my muscles quiver, and involuntarily I closed my eyes, believing the time was close at hand when he would be able to give me a thrust with the knife which hung from his belt.

Just when all hope of saving my own life had fled, I felt his clutch suddenly relax, and, looking up, I saw that our major had saved my life.

The Tightwee had gone to the happy hunting grounds by way of a blow from the commander's hatchet, which he had brought for the purpose of cutting fuel, and I struggled to my feet so nearly breathless that it was impossible to speak the words of gratitude which quivered on my lips.

"Are you hurt?" he asked solicitously, and I could do no more than shake my head.

"Pick up your gun and get under cover," he said quietly. "I have an idea that the other two have taken to their heels; but it is not well to expose yourself unnecessarily."

I did as he had commanded, and while I was regaining my almost spent breath Master Gist came up, ignorant, as a matter of course, regarding what had just occurred.

"There can be no doubt but that we are on the

bank of the Alleghany, and it is out of the question to swim across. We must build a raft, or stay here."

"It is nearly sunset; we will wait till morning," Major Washington said decisively. "There is little to fear now from the enemy, and we can take the chances of making a fire if, indeed, it be possible to gather fuel."

Master Gist looked considerably mystified, and I took it upon myself to explain what had happened, after which he insisted on scouting around while the major and I set about putting up something to shelter us from the rain which, having ceased for a while, was now falling steadily again.

An hour later, when the last light of day was fading out of the gray sky, Master Gist came back with the welcome information that the Tightwees had decided to turn back, having left three of their number dead, and taken one with them who appeared to be seriously wounded, to judge from the blood which stained the snow along their line of march toward Venango.

The commander and myself had thrown a lot of brush together which formed a passably good protection from the wind, and I had been so lucky as to find a decaying log, the middle of which was sufficiently dry to serve as fuel.

On this night, when our fortunes seemed more desperate than at any time since we left the Frazier settlement, we had a camp in which we rested with no slight degree of comfort, and the next morning all hands were astir early for the raft building.

When we reduced our loads to their lowest weight, only one hatchet had been retained, and now this was the only tool with which we could hew down trees, therefore our progress was remarkably slow.

Not until nightfall did we finish the raft, which was no more than large enough to bear the three of us, and it yet remained to break a passage through the shore ice before we could launch the rude craft.

The major decided that it would be wisest to wait until morning before attempting to do anything more, and again we crawled into the frail camp, so weary that slumber came early to the eyelids of all. We slept without a guard, and no harm came to us.

The sun rose in a cloud next day ; but the rain had ceased to fall, and the weather seemed wonderfully pleasant, for it was the first morning since leaving Fort Le Boeuf that we had not faced a storm.

I insisted on wading into the water to cut away the shore ice, and when that had been done we clambered on to the raft, the guns slung over our shoulders that each might arm himself with a long setting-pole to be used in propelling our collection of timbers.

When we gained the swift waters I despaired of ever being able to reach the opposite bank. The raft was caught by the current and whirled here or there despite all our efforts, and instead of making progress toward the other side, we were carried swiftly down stream.

We labored as men will for their lives, until two hours or more had passed, and then we came to a stop by being wedged in between the floating ice in such a manner that unless the raft could be freed from the pressure we were certain of being swamped with but little show of coming out alive.

We laid on the setting-poles with every ounce of strength left in our bodies, and had so far succeeded in the effort that the rude craft was forced partly out from the jam, when suddenly Major Washington slipped on the frosty timbers, falling directly beneath the huge cakes of ice.

He had saved my life, and it was my place to give mine for his. I dove on the instant, and

had the good fortune to grasp his hair just as the current was carrying him yet further under the shore ice, where death must have come quickly.

The raft, relieved of our weight, floated clear of the dangerous pack, and now was it possible for Master Gist to lend us a hand. In five minutes, perhaps less, we were both on the frail craft once more; but our struggles had so weakened the structure that a full half of it was detached.

We could only cling to the logs, allowing them to carry us wheresoever the current trended, and before an hour passed we were thrown like shipwrecked sailors upon a small island, where were but few trees or bushes.

If we had been able to hew down all the timber on that tiny spot of land we could not have constructed another raft, and it seemed to me as if death, after playing with us as a cat does with a mouse, was about to seize upon us.

Our first effort was to find something to serve as fuel; but we succeeded in getting only small bushes which gave forth much smoke and but little heat.

Then, as a means of shaking off the icy cold that came to us through our wet garments, we ran to and fro across the narrow strip of land,

Master Gist gave us a hand and in a few minutes we were both on the frail craft once more. Page 184.

*When Washington Served the King*

exhausting ourselves without doing very much toward relieving our sufferings.

Of that day and night I know but little after two hours or more had passed ; I was like one in the clutch of a horrible dream, and unconsciously did as the major commanded, but without seeming to hear him speak.

I dare not attempt to set down the sensations which were mine, because the mere recital would be too frightful.

Now and then I dimly realized that the major was making a most desperate fight against the elements, in behalf of all, and that Master Gist abandoned hope, believing we were doomed to die by freezing. I was conscious of keen suffering, but it was rather as if I knew that another, not myself, was sinking under it.

When another day dawned, however, I awoke to a knowledge of the situation, and understood that we had been miraculously preserved, although Master Gist had both hands and feet so severely frozen that he could not walk unaided.

The intense cold which had caused us so much pain, was really our preserver, for the river was frozen sufficiently to admit of our half walking, half sliding across it, and now it was possible, provided we could contrive to carry our com-

panion, to move once more toward our destination.

Happily I am come to an end of that journey which cost some of us so much in suffering and pain, and, as it then seemed to me, resulted only in open war that was to wage with unusual bitterness for many years, drenching our fair colony in the blood of men, women and children.

Before this day, after our escape from the island, had come to a close, we were in the company of friends, with all that could be desired for our comfort, and the satisfying knowledge that our mission had been performed in proper fashion, so far as concerned the wishes of Governor Dinwiddie.

It was a party led by Master Frazier, whom we stumbled across. He had come out to establish another trading post about twenty miles from the settlement which bears his name, and by the merest accident we had made our painful way toward it as straight as if directed by some unseen power.

Already had Master Frazier put up a log hut surrounded by a temporary stockade, and provisioned it. He was on the point of returning to the settlement for goods with which to trade, and we might remain there in safety until hav-

ing entirely recovered from the fatigue, and injuries consequent upon exposure, or return with him on the following day.

Knowing how eager our commander was to arrive at Williamsburg with the shortest possible delay, I believed I might guess what would be his decision ; but I was little prepared for that which he counted on my doing.

Master Frazier had much to tell which it was of the highest importance should be made known to Governor Dinwiddie without loss of time, for it gave positive proof that the French were bent on seizing the territory bordering the great rivers without delay.

Bands of the Tightwee and Ottawa tribes had been sent out within a few days, so Master Frazier said, to make friendly visits to the tribes of the Six Nations with the hope of inducing them, either by threats or promises, to dig up the hatchet against the Virginia colonists, and already were stockaded buildings being erected by the French on the rivers.

Unless immediate steps were taken to check them, our new enemies would be so firmly established by spring that it might not be possible to oust them from their places of vantage.

This information, together with what we had

learned at Fort Le Boeuf and Venango, caused our major the liveliest impatience to have speech with the governor, and he announced that he should accompany Master Frazier on his return to the settlement next day.

We all knew, however, that Master Gist would be forced to remain where he was until having recovered the use of his limbs, for he was then, as might be imagined, so much of a cripple that he could not move from one part of the room to another without as much assistance as a very small child would have required.

Having announced his intentions, and made arrangements with some of Master Frazier's serving men for the care of Master Gist, Major Washington spoke of the people we had left behind, expecting to meet them somewhere on the banks of the Alleghany.

The Dutchman, Masters McQuire and Currin, together with the drivers, Steward and Jenkins, were yet in the wilderness, probably looking to our commander for help in event of being confronted by more serious trouble than the breaking down of the horses.

"My duty to the colony demands that I proceed to Williamsburg with all possible despatch," Major Washington said slowly, and looking at

me in a manner which caused me no little surprise and uneasiness. "It is not allowed, either by the rules of war or humanity, that I should absolutely abandon a portion of my command, unless, perchance, it might be that it was necessary a few should be sacrificed in order to save many. If Master Gist could be counted on to move about freely within a week or ten days, I should go feeling comfortable in mind, for he would take it upon himself to turn back in search of our comrades."

Then it was, as he gazed at me thus earnestly, that I understood the meaning of all this talk.

I had been engaged simply as an interpreter among the Indians, therefore he could not order me to turn back in the search ; but he was hoping I would volunteer for the service.

Like a flash of light my memory went over all the suffering and privation we had known since leaving the Frazier plantation. As if in a picture I saw before me the labor and distress of him who should turn back now to retrace his steps, and I also understood the terrible loneliness of such a journey.

The outlook was so gloomy that I doubted if a single man might venture into the wilderness while winter held sway over the land, and suc-

ceed in even making his way to the nearest of the Indian villages, to say nothing of finding a party who had probably been wandering from one point to another.

Then again, the words of Master Frazier rang clear in my ears. He had said that bands of Tightwees and Ottawas were roaming through the forest on their mission of blood, and I knew full well what would be my fate if I came across even the smallest of these parties.

While all these things were floating through my mind Major Washington regarded me intently, with the question in his eyes which his lips refused to utter.

All of Master Frazier's party had heard his words, and sat watching us, knowing what the commander had in mind.

It seemed much like courting death to volunteer for such a service, and yet had I been ten times as timorous as I naturally am, I would not have dared to hold my peace, thus proclaiming to all that I was afraid to turn back in search of our comrades.

Twice I tried to speak before it was possible to hold command over my voice, and then I said in a tone which sounded weak and afar off :

"I am ready to go back, sir, and will do my

best to succeed, although I fail to see how I may be of benefit to them if it so chances that I strike their trail."

"Thank you, Davidson," the major said quietly, much as though I had offered myself for some trifling service that might have been performed by a child. "I expected you would volunteer, for you are a brave man, and would not go on to Williamsburg, if perchance it was of no especial importance that you reached that town immediately, while those whom you had called comrades were, perhaps, perishing in the wilderness."

I was irritated by the fashion of his speech; he made it appear as if I could not call myself a true man unless I turned blunderingly back searching in the wilderness for a party of men, which was much the same as if I had undertaken to look over a hay-stack in quest of a lost needle, and I said petulantly:

"I never presumed, sir, to call the Dutchman a comrade. It would be fitting if he died in the forest, for he was a hindrance rather than a help to you in the work which is so nearly performed."

"The fellow knew no better, therefore can he be excused. Besides, when we see a human being

menaced by a cruel death, a brave man does not stop to ask if he is friend or foe. There are others with Master Van Braam.'

"Ay, sir, and if I lend any aid, it will be to them, not the Dutchman. I have said I would turn back, and my face shall be set toward Venango when the morning comes; but you have yet to tell me how I can be of service to men like Masters McQuire and Currin, who know the forest better than the best of the Delaware scouts?"

"If you find them in good health, making a certain steady advance, however slow, then you will have had the labor and the hardships in vain. But it may be they have broken down, discouraged, bewildered, or sick. In such case you can guide them to this clearing, where Master Frazier stands ready to supply all that may be needed, charging the outlay to the colony. If there be dissensions among them, which is not impossible in case matters did not go to Master Van Braam's liking, then you are to take command, the authority for doing which I shall give you before we part. Carry with you from here all that may be needed; Master Frazier shall supply you with a horse, and I count on your striking their trail by following back on our own. By this time the streams and the swamps will have been frozen,

and you should have no trouble in advancing at a reasonably rapid pace."

"And when I have succeeded, or failed, sir?" I ventured to ask, believing at the moment that I was going to my death.

"Search me out. That the colonists will fight against the Frenchmen is certain, and you shall go into the war by my side."

That was to be my reward! If the wilderness did not swallow me up forever; if the Tightwees or the Ottawas failed to compass my death, then I was to have the privilege of yet further tempting fate by marching into a battle with Major Washington!

Just at that moment I was so bitter in spirit that I could not look at anything in a proper light, and held my peace like a peevish child who rebels against his parents, but dare not give words to the rebellion.

If Major Washington suspected what was in my mind, he gave no sign of so doing; but began to advise how I should proceed, what provisions it would be best to take with me, and otherwise discussed the venture as if my heart had been set upon making it.

I listened in silence, never once opening my mouth until he laid it down as a law that I show

respect for Master Van Braam, who, so the major said emphatically, was a learned, even though a foolish man.

Then it was that I spoke up, pertly as an angry child might have done, and said wilfully :

"If the Dutchman and I meet face to face, it is he who must be careful of his speech. I have never said aught to offend him, and yet he has not lost an opportunity of showing that he considers himself far my superior."

"Of that there is no reason why we should speak at present, save to say that if you would refuse to aid when he was in distress, simply because you did not admire him, then many besides Van Braam might with good right claim to be your superior.

He could have spoken no other words that would have pained me so deeply as did these, and chiefly because I knew full well they were true.

I hung my head for very shame, and he, understanding what was in my mind, changed the subject abruptly by speaking of the course I should pursue in order to strike our trail above the island on which we had been wrecked.

The others present joined in the conversation, but it was as if the reproof had been forgotten by all save myself ; yet the words shone out plainly

before my mind's eye, until I could have bitten off my tongue because of having allowed it to wag so freely and so foolishly.

Master Frazier advised with me as to what I ought to take from his stores, and gave me much useful information concerning that portion of the country with which I was unfamiliar; but even above the shame I felt, was the terrible thought that on the morrow I would be turning back to retrace my steps across that vast wilderness wherein I had come so near losing my life.

Under ordinary circumstances I flatter myself that I can look upon the possibility of meeting a violent death with as much calmness as the average man of my experience; but to go out voluntarily and alone where the odds were heavy against my ever being heard of again, was something most horrible to contemplate.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ALONE.

EVEN had I been so disposed, there was no opportunity to linger in camp next morning. Master Frazier had his company astir a full hour before daylight, and Major Washington was among them, making ready for the last stage of his journey.

Master Gist, owing to the condition of his hands and feet, could not help himself to any extent; but it had been decided at the last moment that he might ride, by being lashed in the saddle, and in such fashion he was to accompany the party on their return to the Frazier settlement.

I seemed to be more alone than ever, on this morning when all save me were working for a common end.

Foolish though it may appear at this late day, I am constrained to set down the fact that my heart was filled with sadness and forebodings when each man of the company was assigned a station during the coming march, and I not reckoned among them.

They were returning to home and friends, while I was to re-enter the wilderness alone, where even a single enemy might be able to take my life.

Let it not be understood that I was entirely neglected. The first care of Major Washington and Master Frazier was to provide me with an outfit, and a more generous one no lad ever had. Two new blankets ; as much powder and ball as I cared to carry ; an extra gun, knife and pair of moccasins.

As for food, I had the pick of the stores, and even ventured to burden the horse with a bushel of corn, for I knew how the poor beast would suffer unless some provision was made for him.

It was the major himself who selected my steed, and he took from the stable the best animal there regardless of ownership ; the colony of Virginia was chargeable with all my expenses.

When my belongings had been gathered, and the horse given an extra feed of grain, we sat down to breakfast, the last meal I might ever partake of in the company of white men.

Then the major aided me in saddling and packing my outfit, after which he turned away as if bent on other duties ; but I knew he was giving me an opportunity to ride away without too many

last words, which, as a rule, go far toward shaking a fellow's courage.

All the company, with the exception of Master Gist, who lay helpless in the log building, were busily engaged making ready for departure when I led my horse out into the thicket, beyond view of the clearing, without speaking to any one.

There I halted long enough to put up a prayer that I might be allowed to return to my own people once more, and then mounted, riding at a walk along the trail made by Master Frazier's company when they brought us in the day previous.

Up to the point where we were found, two nearly exhausted men trying to carry a disabled comrade, I would have no trouble in making my way without danger of straying from the course. The difficult portion would be in finding the place on the opposite bank where we had built the raft.

Once there, so I argued, it would be comparatively a simple task to go back on our own trail, for the snow could not yet have covered it.

I rode slowly in order that my horse might be reasonably fresh when we came to that portion of the journey where he would be forced to feed on leaves and such herbage as could be found under the snow, and by nightfall was opposite the island on which we had been shipwrecked.

I led my horse out into the thicket, and before mounting, put up a prayer for my safe return. Page 198.

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Here I put up a shelter of boughs for myself and my steed, for we were to be stabled together, and ate supper while he was contentedly munching his corn.

Nor did I feel uncomfortable although the night was very cold. The storm had ceased, but the moon was not yet to be seen because of the clouds, and I said to myself that my situation could not be desperate, so far as battling with elements was concerned, while the weather was fair.

The river was frozen from shore to shore; I could cross it at any point, and it was in my mind to follow up on the opposite side next day in order to avoid missing that particular spot on the bank from which would be found our trail, leading, as I hoped, straight back to where we had left those of whom I was in search.

It was not possible to guard against an attack by the enemies whom I had good reason to believe were in the vicinity, unless I attempted to get on without sleep, therefore, confiding myself to the care of the good God, as when I was a prisoner in the hands of the Delawares, I laid down to sleep by the side of the horse.

The light of a new day awakened me, and I rose to my feet refreshed in mind and body. The hardest portion of my task, that of cutting loose

from the men of my kind, was past, and I looked forward with far less of apprehension than when I lay securely in Master Frazier's trading station.

I crossed on the ice when beginning the day's journey, and followed up the course of the river as nearly as the undergrowth would permit, thinking to arrive at the place where we had built the raft, before night overtook me.

In this I was disappointed, and surprised at learning that we had been carried down the river so far by the current. I would have said that we drifted no more than four or five miles, and yet when my horse had walked eight hours, which could not have represented less than sixteen miles, it was positive I was not yet come to the point where we struck the river while fighting back the Tightwees.

Lest one should think I ought to have traveled more than two miles an hour, let it be set down that through the deep snow, and amid the underbrush which oftentimes necessitated a detour of many miles in order to gain one of distance in a straight line, it was really good headway.

I camped on this second night in a dense thicket of pine bushes, and was not obliged to spend many minutes in putting up such a shelter as

served my needs ; but now the sensation of utter loneliness came upon me with even more force than when I was looking forward to it on the evening Major Washington proposed I go in search of our company.

Never before had I so fully realized the solitude of the forest ; I could not remember of a silence so profound. It was as if I had suddenly been taken from the earth, and set down on a tract of land where was no form of life. My heart was like to burst because of the sense of utter desolation which overwhelmed me, and I had become so dispirited as not to be ashamed of the tears which coursed down my cheeks.

Sleep was a sweet consoler to me, and, induced by fatigue, it did not linger long before fastening upon my eyelids.

Next morning I awakened considerably more of a man than when I laid down, and, to prevent a return of loneliness, I hastened to take up the line of march.

Before noon I had arrived at the scene of the raft building, and found our trail written plainly in the snow as I had expected.

Pushing forward at a better pace, because the path was somewhat freed from snow by our previous passage, I came upon the places where we

had checked a Tightwee in his course, and knew that the enemy had fled in alarm after our last shot, by the fact that a dead Indian lay face downward behind a clump of bushes. Had they not been frightened, a stop would have been made to bury the body lest the scalp fall into the hands of a foe.

I said to myself that my safest plan, and perhaps the quickest way of finding those for whom I sought, would be to go back on the trail made by the major, Master Gist and myself, until I came to that point where we parted company with the others. From there I would follow their course as shown by the snow, provided they had left the temporary camp. This would cost me more traveling ; but, as I reckoned, would be the cheapest in the end.

Leaving the dead body of the Tightwee undisturbed, for I did not care to carry his scalp when at any moment I might come across other members of his tribe, I rode onward, keeping my eyes alternately on the trail and the surrounding country.

When I have set down this last record it is the same as if I had told all the story of three days' march, for I saw no living thing, heard no sound save the creaking of the trees as they were swayed

to and fro by the wind, nor found anything to betoken that others were in the wilderness.

Then, suddenly, just at nightfall on the sixth day after leaving Master Frazier's trading post, I saw a thin curl of smoke coming up from behind a thicket near at hand, and in my surprise and agitation I reined the horse in until he was thrown back on his haunches.

This evidence of human beings almost frightened me, who had been alone so long that it had come to appear as if I was the only inhabitant left in the world.

It was reasonable to suppose that those who had built the fire were my enemies, and I had come so near already that, if they were keeping watch, it would be too late to beat a retreat.

Hardly daring to breathe lest the sound attract attention, I wheeled the horse carefully around, and retraced my steps until coming to a portion of the forest where he could be partially concealed from view.

There I tied the bridle rein to a tree; threw one of my blankets over his head so that he might not be temped to whinny in case any one passed, and, after looking to it that my gun was ready for immediate use, I stole forward cautiously, taking advantage of every bush in my path.

It was not a simple matter to steal up over that white surface of snow without betraying my movements to any who might be on the look-out, and had those by the fire kept the watch that their situation demanded, I could not have advanced twenty paces without attracting attention.

As it was, however, I succeeded in making my way directly into the thicket where the fire was kindled, and then an exclamation of surprise and perhaps delight burst from my lips, as I recognized the two persons who were stretched at full length in front of the blaze.

The noise which I made, slight though it was, caused the loungers to spring up suddenly, weapons in hand, and then I showed myself boldly, for I had accidentally stumbled across Half-King and Running Deer.

Of all the Delawares these two were my friends, and at first sight of them I wondered exceedingly why they were in the forest alone.

I noted with satisfaction the look of pleasure which came over Running Deer's face as he saw me; but Half-King was too old a warrior to express any emotion. He simply motioned for me to come to the fire, which invitation was sufficient welcome to please me, and then threw himself down on his blanket again.

I explained that I had left my horse near by, and would go to fetch him, after which I hurried away, and half an hour later the animal was stabled in the thicket while I lay before the fire with the Delawares, inexpressibly thankful at being in the company of human beings once more.

Not until I had eaten of their fresh venison, and offered my store for their acceptance, did either of us ask why the other was in the wilderness. Then Half-King paved the way for my explanations by inquiring if the governor's messenger was near at hand.

I told him all that had happened, and explained why I was going back alone, whereat he shook his head gravely, as if to say the danger was too great to be met by a single white man.

"The Tightwees and Ottawas are on the war-path against the English of Virginia, and if the foolish fat man and those who are with him have not been killed or taken by this time, they soon will be."

"It is for me to know if they are alive or dead," I replied. "The major sent me, and I must do his bidding, even though in so doing I lose my scalp."

"You will not get back as far as their trail," the Delaware said in a tone of conviction.

Thinking that I might gain a better idea of the situation by learning why they had left Jeskakake and White Thunder behind, I asked bluntly for an explanation, and Half-King made no hesitation about imparting the information.

This is the story as he told it in his deliberate manner, often pausing for many minutes at a time as if to give me opportunity to thoroughly understand it in all its bearings.

It appeared that when our party left Venango Half-King was not inclined to desert us; but allowed himself to be over-persuaded by Jeskakake and White Thunder. Running Deer, being a young brave without a tepee of his own, was forced to obey the commands of his elders. It was urged by the two Delawares who insisted on remaining at the French outpost, that our party would be forced to turn back within eight and forty hours, therefore it was well to save themselves as much labor and suffering as the attempt would cost.

Immediately after we had departed, Captain Joncaire renewed his offers of friendship, and promised to send valuable presents to Logstown if the sachems would agree, in the name of their tribe, not to take sides against the French. Fire-water was dealt out generously, and the natural

result was that an orgy followed, during the beginning of which one of the Tightwees let slip the secret that the captain had sent a party on the major's trail to kill him.

Now certain it is that Half-King was an honest man as Indians go, and abhorred anything in the shape of treachery, therefore as soon as he recovered from the effects of the liquor sufficiently to understand the information which had been given, he went at once to Captain Joncaire, flatly charging that officer with his crime.

"An Indian does not stretch out the pipe of peace with one hand, and dig up the hatchet with the other," he said sternly to the French commandant, so Running Deer, who was present at the interview, told me. "If the Frenchmen have a double face for white men, then their words to the Delawares are not to be trusted. I will go back to my people, and tell them what I have seen and heard."

Being thus accused of treachery, Captain Joncaire had no hesitation about lying, and declared flatly that he had never even dreamed of dealing double with the messenger from the governor of Virginia. In fact, he accused the Tightwee of speaking falsely, and so managed the matter that the Indian who had revealed the secret to Half-

King voluntarily came forward and declared there was no truth in his statement.

Half-King was silenced but not convinced. Instead of setting out at once to follow our trail, however, he searched the settlement until he had ascertained beyond doubt that five or six Indians had left immediately after our party went away, and this was sufficient to prove that Captain Joncaire had descended to a lie.

There was a stormy scene between the three Delaware sachems. Jeskakake and White Thunder had been liberally supplied with rum, and were not disposed to quit such hospitable quarters to flounder through the snow toward Logstown. Therefore it was they declared that Half-King was mistaken; that Captain Joncaire had spoken the truth, and refused to budge a single inch until spring.

Running Deer was allowed to choose which side he would espouse, and readily allied himself with Half-King.

The two made ready for departure; but the Tightwees opposed every obstacle short of actually using force, and thus delayed them eight and forty hours. At the end of which time Half-King strode gravely into the center of the settlement, gun in hand, and announced that he would

shoot the first who laid so much as a straw in his path toward the trail of the Virginians.

Captain Joncaire knew full well that any indignity offered this powerful sachem would be resented by all the tribes of the Six Nations, and, not daring to bring such a foe around the ears of the French, did his best to make it appear that he had had no hand in the delaying of the chief.

In order the better to clear his skirts of the charge of treachery, he announced to the Tightwees present that whoever should raise his hand against Half-King or Running Deer was an enemy to the French people, and charged them with sending out parties to make certain the two were not interfered with in any way during their journey.

Then the Delawares began their march, leaving behind them Jeskakake and White Thunder, who promised faithfully not to bind themselves to the French against the English of Virginia.

Half-King had no difficulty in following the trail until he arrived at the point where our party had separated, and he readily guessed that Major Washington was one of the three who had left the horses behind in order to travel more rapidly.

He and his companion set out on our trail, giving no heed to the Dutchman's party, and before

many hours had passed they met three Indians supporting a fourth who was wounded, on the way to Venango.

These fellows made no secret of the fact that they had been charged by Captain Joncaire with the murder of Major Washington, and now, having had enough of such difficult work, were returning unsuccessful. They announced, however, that the French captain would not be disappointed as to the fruitless result of his treachery, for there were several bands of Tightwees and Ottawas in the wilderness bent on the same mission, and it was hardly probable all would fail.

Because of such fact Half-King believed that the Dutchman's party had already come to grief, and advised me most earnestly to return with him to Logstown.

After I explained to him, however, that I had voluntarily accepted the task, and could not honorably forsake it without knowing to a certainty that the travelers were either dead or prisoners, he ceased to speak of my turning back ; but remained in front of the fire as if plunged in deep thought, while Running Deer and I held converse on the possibility of a desperate war between the English of Virginia and the French.

As a matter of course, I remained with my friends the Delawares that night, forgetting for the time being that in the morning it would again be my duty to set off alone on what now seemed an almost hopeless quest.

Refreshed and greatly encouraged thereby, I arose from my bed of pine boughs next morning at daylight, and gave to the horse a small portion of corn, making ready my own breakfast while he was contentedly eating his.

Half-King bestirred himself when I began moving around, and after my preparations for continuing the journey had been made, he said in a friendly tone :

"The Frenchmen have come to take away the land from the Delawares, while the English have ever shown themselves very good friends. I must go to my people to guard them against listening to the lying words of our enemies. When I have told what the French captain did against the messenger whom he had treated as a brother, the eyes of the Delawares will be opened. Therefore I shall go my way ; but if Running Deer is minded to join you in the search for those who travel with the foolish man, you will not be alone. His wounds are healed, and he can travel on foot as fast as you in the saddle."

A great wave of joy and relief came into my heart at the idea of having the Indian lad as a companion during the long march, and I looked quickly toward him.

"It is not needed that I speak to the Delawares of what I have seen in the French settlement, for Half-King can tell the whole story. I will go to search for the Dutchman, because there is a debt between us which must be paid some day," and having thus explained that desire for revenge, not motives of humanity, dictated his decision, Running Deer began gathering up his belongings.

"The foolish man is not one of the English; you have spoken well," Half-King replied, and then he divided the stores, taking for himself the smaller portion as he said :

"Your journey will be long ; I shall be with my people on the fourth day. Take all you need, and see to it that both of you come back to me before giving to the governor's messenger an account of your work."

I readily promised to stop at Logstown when I should be free to set out for Williamsburg, and we loaded on the back of the horse all the belongings, for it was my purpose to walk ; I would not ride while my companion was on foot.

When he had given us two-thirds of his stores, and emptied his powder-horn and shot-pouch until he had no more than three charges left, Half-King ceased to pay any further attention to either Running Deer or myself. He sat in front of the fire gazing at the embers as if his one desire was to be alone, and I was too well acquainted with the ways of Indians to make any effort at arousing him.

We packed our goods on the horse, looked around once more to be certain nothing had been forgotten, and then set out, speaking no word to the Indian who remained by the fire like a statue.

Not until we were a mile away from the place of encampment did either of us speak, and then it was Running Deer who broke the almost painful silence.

"Half-King loves the English too well," he said in a tone of dissatisfaction.

"Why do you say that? The English of Virginia have been his good friends."

"Yes, while he is so strong that they dare not say nay to his yes; but when they have outgrown him, he will see how much love is kept for the Delawares."

"You have been listening to the lying tongues

of the Tightwees, who have learned their lesson from Captain Joncaire," I replied sternly, really feeling a certain sensation of fear that Running Deer should have hit so near my own thoughts, for once the young braves of his tribe got such an idea in their minds, much harm would come to the colonists.

I could not answer him as I should have done, for I also believed much the same, having heard the people of Williamsburg complain that the sachems of the Delawares held their heads too high, and I knew the Indians would find little love when our countrymen were no longer afraid of them.

"It makes no change in the wind when the Tightwees talk," Running Deer replied scornfully. "I am not a child, and have seen the English in their own settlements, as well as among our people. They are two colors; red for us when in the forest, and white for themselves in their own tepees."

"You have talked too much with the hot-heads of your tribe, else we would not have met you on the war-path."

"I shall go there again," he said decidedly.

"When?"

"After the English no longer fear the French

people they will try to take our lands. It is not well to be loved by the white men."

"Then why did you come with me?"

"You are more Indian than English, and I wanted to come face to face with the Dutchman."

When he first made mention of his desire to go with me in order to meet Master Van Braam, I gave little heed to his words, so great was my joy at the idea of having a companion during the long journey; but now that he repeated it, and with vindictive emphasis, I began to ask myself if I had done right in allowing him to accompany me.

With Running Deer by my side I was at the same time trying to give succor, and bringing death on their trail.

This new thought disturbed me not a little; but I tried to put it from my mind for the very good reason that it was now too late to make any change of plans. Running Deer was my companion, and I could not send him back without making an enemy who might, and probably could, prevent me from doing that which I had been bidden.

The lad understood that I was not pleased by his words, and sought to make me a partner in his plan of revenge, by saying:

"You have no love for the Dutchman. He has not been a friend of yours."

"That is true, yet I would not do him a harm while my orders are to help him out of the wilderness."

"When he is again in the white men's settlement will you also be his enemy?"

"Not to the extent of killing him; but I shall have some very plain talk with Master Van Braam."

"You will get the squaws to help you!" the Delaware said scornfully, for he could not understand how any quarrel could be settled save by the shedding of blood.

It appeared to me as if our conversation was taking a dangerous turn, and I tried to change it by asking him how he spent his time in Venango after I had left.

Running Deer knew full well why I turned back to another subject, and refused to make any reply, whereupon we trudged along in silence a full hour.

We were on the trail made by Major Washington's party, of which I had been one, and it was marked so plainly that only a blind man might have gone astray.

The Delaware walked in advance, he having

insisted on so doing ; the horse followed him, and I brought up the rear to make certain the animal did not stray.

At the best we could not make more than two miles an hour ; but even this slow progress was so very much faster than I had been traveling a few days previous, that it seemed really speedy, and I said to myself it had been foolish in me to look forward with so much of fear to the journey in search of my comrades, for it was like to be performed quickly.

When noon came we halted in a thicket and allowed the horse to feed upon the moss which could be found by scraping away the snow, while we ate a hearty meal of cold broiled venison from Half-King's outfit.

We were not unduly fatigued, and this resting amid the bushes where we were sheltered from the wind and warmed by the sun, was exceeding pleasant.

Running Deer spoke of the journey which yet lay before us ; of Masters McQuire and Currin, whom he considered his very good friends, and then would have come back to his plan for revenge upon Van Braam, but that I checked him by saying :

"I cannot listen when you speak of killing one

whom I have been ordered to save. Your plans are not mine, and it will be well if I know nothing of them."

"You are a coward who allows himself to be spit upon!" he said angrily, and I replied, giving him a soft answer because it would have been the height of folly to take part in a quarrel as we were then situated:

"I am the one who has given his word, and until the work is done which the major commanded, I am forced to stand as a friend to Master Van Braam."

"Even when he laughs at you?"

"He will keep a straight face, Running Deer, if it so be he is yet alive, until having got out of the wilderness, and then I am not bound by any promise."

He looked up eagerly, as if thinking he understood that there was a threat in my words; but before he could speak the horse ceased eating suddenly, pricked up his ears, and, as it seemed to me, was on the point of whinnying, when I seized him by the nostrils, thus cutting off any such noise.

Both Running Deer and I knew full well that the animal had scented human beings, and, as can well be imagined, we were immediately on

the alert, for we had good reason to look upon as our enemies any who might be in the wilderness at that time.

I covered the horse's head as soon as it was possible to get a blanket from the pack, and while I was thus engaged Running Deer wormed his way beneath the bushes to have a fair look at the newcomers.

Before I had fastened the animal to my liking, the Delaware was by my side whispering :

"Tightwees! Eight braves on the war-path, and they carry scalps! The trail leads them here!"

I seized my gun instinctively, even while knowing we two could make but little resistance against such a band, and the thumping of my heart was good proof that a sensation of timorousness was rapidly creeping over me.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WAR-PARTY.

THERE was deadly menace to the English of Virginia in the fact that the Tightwees, who were known to be friends of the French, had dared to take to the war-path.

It showed beyond a doubt that those who were trying to wrest the lands bordering the great rivers from the English, had countenanced, if not actually advised, the opening of hostilities, and we understood that murder had already been committed because of the scalps Running Deer had seen.

More than this, we knew white settlers from Virginia were the first victims, because these Indians would not have dared to make an attack upon others of their kind, nor would the French have permitted it while they were trying to induce the Delawares to openly declare themselves as allies.

Had I been alone at that moment, it is almost certain I should have fallen beneath the knives of

the party, for they were following the open trail where I lay under cover, and there was no opportunity for concealment. I must have been forced to flee, and they might readily have overtaken me.

So suddenly had the danger come upon us, and so desperate did the situation appear, that I lost my head, so to speak, and stood plucking at the blanket which covered the horse's head in helpless bewilderment.

It was Running Deer who saved my life as surely as I had saved his when the Dutchman would have committed murder.

"It must be thought that I am on the trail alone!" he whispered. "It may be they will turn back when I have said that the major has gotten out of the wilderness, and that there are no settlers this side the river, therefore your footprints will not be seen."

Even then I failed to understand what might be done, and looked around wildly, whereupon he pulled the blanket from the horse's head, thrust it into my hands, and said sharply:

"Crawl under the bushes, and remain quiet."

As he spoke Running Deer seized the bridle-rein and moved forward, and my wits returned, for I began to have more than a glimmer of his plan.

At this point the thicket was so dense that one

might readily hide almost anywhere, unless a thorough search was made, and I crept under a thick bush, taking good care to brush the snow over my footprints as I advanced.

By chance I had selected the only spot where I could have a view of the enemy, and thus it was that all which took place was plain before my eyes.

Running Deer went boldly on as if ignorant there were others besides himself in the vicinity, and on coming into view of the Tightwees started in well-feigned surprise. Then he came to a halt, and held up his open hand, with the palm outward in token of friendly intentions.

This signal was not answered immediately ; the Indians gazed at him searchingly an instant, ready to repel or make an attack if it should be seen that he had companions, and then he who appeared to be the leader stepped forward a few paces as he asked :

"Where are the English who were with you at the French post?"

"Why do you speak to me of them?" Running Deer cried angrily. "Were you not at Venango when the Delawares remained behind, leaving the white men to go their way?"

The Indian assented to this by his silence, and thus did I know beyond a doubt that this band of Tightwees had been sent on the war-path against

the colonists, by that gallant French captain who would have allowed one of his guests to be murdered.

"Did you leave the village in company with Half-King?" the Tightwee leader asked after a pause.

"That much you saw," the Delaware returned boldly.

"Then why is your face set backward on the trail?"

"Why may it not be?" and now Running Deer showed signs of rising anger. "Are the Delawares forbidden to go there or come here as pleases them?"

"The hatchet has been dug up against the English by the Tightwees and their friends, the French; but Half-King refused to put on his war-paint."

"Why should he do so? Is it because the Tightwees have told him that he must? Since the hatchet has been taken up is the forest no longer free to the Delawares?"

"Not if they would aid the English."

"What has Jeskakake or White Thunder told you? Those sachems yet remain at the French outpost. Do you require that they shall raise their hands against their own people?"

The Tightwee was evidently tiring of this inter-

view when the young Delaware was asking too many awkward questions, and after speaking a few words with his followers, he turned toward Running Deer once more.

"Is the Delaware going to join the sachems of this tribe at the French village?"

"What else would have set my face backward on the trail? The messenger from the governor of Virginia has gone past the village of the Delawares, and cannot now be stopped on his way. When this was known Running Deer turned toward the French post, for he would learn what is to be done."

"Where is Half-King?"

"In his own tepee; Running Deer left him two days' march this side the village of the Delawares."

This last reply appeared to settle all the doubts of the Tightwees, for the leader held up his open hand with the palm toward Running Deer, and the young Delaware advanced boldly until he was in the midst of the party, where I could no longer hear what was said.

The Indians appeared to receive him in the most friendly fashion, and the younger members of the party displayed with pride the scalp-locks of fair hair which hung at their belts, all the while seemingly urging him to some course, for

he shook his head doubtfully from time to time, whereat they talked yet more earnestly.

The one fear in my mind was that the war-party would continue on the same course as when we first came upon them, in which case my discovery was certain, for once past the thicket where I lay hidden, it would be seen that two persons had walked with the horse.

After that was made apparent it would be as well for me to show myself without delay, else should I be dragged forth with much abuse and great display of cruelty.

Now, having nothing better to do, I began to speculate as to what my position would be if the Tightwees should turn back toward Venango and iusist upon Running Deer's accompanying them. He could not refuse to do so, after having given them to understand that his course lay in that direction, and I would be left alone with nothing in the way of an outfit save one blanket and my gun.

It was not a pleasing prospect to look forward on, and yet I knew it might readily happen ; but I strove to drive such thoughts from my mind, by watching the Tightwees.

They were traveling with horses, and had an ample supply of fresh meat, a goodly amount of

which some of the younger men began to cook immediately a fire could be built.

As the odor of flesh assailed my nostrils another disagreeable thought occurred to me, which was that the party might conclude to camp where they were for the night, in which case I must perforce remain beneath the shelter of the bushes until I was like to get as much of such a resting-place as would satisfy me for all time.

Judging from what I could see, the Tightwees had concluded to receive Running Deer as a friend; they most likely believed he could be induced to join them against the English, and were bent on showing what jovial companions they could be.

After partaking of a hearty meal, during which the young Delaware was served with all the choice portions of meat, the braves built the fire higher, and lounged around as if bent on remaining there all night.

Running Deer could do no less than play his part despite my disagreeable position, and he seemed to be proving that he was no mean hand at story-telling.

I watched and watched until the sun sank in the west, and then was it certain I must remain in my bed of snow until morning, only to be captured finally if the war-party took it into their

heads to go on in the direction from which we had come.

Well, I could do no less than put a pleasant face on the affair, and tried to keep myself warm by piling up the snow against the outside of my blanket.

When evening came I noted that Running Deer moved restlessly about, oftentimes approaching near to where I lay concealed, and it came into my head that it was his purpose to have speech with me if I would do my part.

With this idea I kept sharp watch of his movements, and finally the time came when he advanced within two paces of my hiding-place, throwing into the bushes something which he took from beneath his blanket.

By dint of much crawling, and groping about with my hands, I finally found that which he had flung at me, and was not disappointed in learning that it was a slice of cooked meat, rather the worse from having been carried under his blanket so long. I was too hungry to stand upon trifles in the way of cleanliness, however, and set about devouring it with a feeling of thankfulness in my heart because I was not called upon to suffer hunger as well as cold.

Never do I remember of a night which seemed

so long! I dared not close my eyes in slumber lest something should happen for which I had not been prepared, and, nerved up as I was, the seconds seemed like minutes, while each hour passed as if it was an entire day.

There was a sensation of deepest relief in my heart, even though the time of greatest danger was near at hand, when it was possible to see the gray streaks of coming day in the eastern sky, and I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of the first member of the party who awakened.

It was, as I fancied might be the case, Running Deer who arose cautiously and slowly lest he should awaken his companions, and immediately I crept partially out from beneath the bushes, for I knew that he counted on speaking with me before the others were aroused.

The young Delaware lounged toward the clump of bushes as if simply bent on shaking off the slumber which had enchained him, and when he stood within half a dozen paces, concealed by the shadows, I appeared before him.

"You must walk boldly past the sleepers, and make all haste on their trail. I will overtake you when they have departed."

"Then they will not turn back?" I asked with a sigh of relief.

"No, it is decided to make an attack on the Frazier settlement, and you must pass them now, before they see our trail."

It was as dangerous a task as one could be called upon to perform, this attempt to march past a band of sleeping Indians who were likely to be aroused by the slightest unusual noise, if indeed some were not awake already ; but I knew it must be done if I would save my life, therefore I did not linger to think over the perils.

Running Deer hastened back and threw himself down once more in front of the embers, and when he had done so I came out from the bushes, moving leisurely as he had, lounging along as if it was my purpose to join the party.

My only hope of succeeding in the effort if any of the Tightwees were awake, was that, while slumber hung heavily upon their eyelids, I might be mistaken for one of the band, therefore it was I must walk with apparent heedlessness.

The heavy beating of my heart sounded in my ears like the drumming of a partridge in the springtime, and the moisture of fear filled my eyes to overflowing.

I gained the place where the horses were hobbled ; stopped there for an instant to make certain

my movements had not been noted with suspicion, and then passed on in the direction of Venango, my knees trembling under me as I walked.

It was yet quite dark; the shadows of night had not given way before the light of dawn, and when I had gained a point twenty paces or more beyond the sleepers, I knew it would not be possible to distinguish my form in the gloom.

Then it was that I struck out at my best pace, traveling as a man only can when he knows life depends upon his individual efforts, and literally wet with perspiration which had been brought out through my skin by fear.

In ten minutes I was well clear of the encampment; but danger yet menaced.

When the Tightwees made ready to continue the march it was almost certain they would see my trail in the snow, and I knew that Running Deer could not give an explanation which would be free from suspicious points. The young Delaware would then be in the same peril as was I, and there were many chances that the end of our days was very near at hand.

I continued to walk at my best pace until I was, according to my belief, a full mile from where the Tightwees spent the night, and then I climbed into a huge pine tree, having taken care to

cover my trail for a distance of an hundred paces from it.

Here, wedging my body between the branches, I could see far out over the path by which I had come, and would thus be able to get timely warning if the enemy turned back in pursuit, while they could not find me save by climbing twenty trees or more, each of which might well have concealed a fugitive.

In fact, I fully expected to be pursued, and made a rest for my musket by bending down one of the branches, in order that I might take deliberate aim when they arrived, for it was my purpose to die fighting rather than at the stake. I would take with me into the Beyond as many Tightwees as I had bullets, unless they succeeded in killing me at the first shot.

Because of being in such a frame of mind, it was hardly possible to credit the evidence of my own senses when I saw Running Deer riding toward me, apparently unconcerned as to whether or no he might be followed.

I rubbed my eyes and looked twice before daring to descend, and then with a heart full of thanksgiving, I clambered down as he approached.

"Well?" I asked breathlessly, as he dismounted and we took up our line of march once more.

"They will not come after us before noon, and by that time we must have put many miles between ourselves and them."

"Will they not see my trail?"

"It has been agreed that they remain where we left them, till noon, for they have traveled long and fast, and need rest. None of them will have any reason for going beyond the thicket, therefore, as I have said, we are free for five hours or more."

"Where did they get the scalps?"

"At that settlement on the river above where we crossed. There were two families."

"And none were taken prisoners?"

"Not one; they could not be troubled with captives while chasing the governor's messenger."

I could not repress a shudder of what was very like fear as I pictured the scene in that small settlement of two dwellings when the painted demons arrived. I had lived through a similar experience, save that I only, out of eight, was permitted to live.

No good could come by speculating upon what had been done, for now it was that I needed all my courage, and dwelling upon the bloody work of the Indians was not the proper way in which to drive off timorousness, therefore it was I tried

to change the subject of the conversation by asking why the Tightwees went so far afoot as to make for the Frazier settlement, when there were other white people nearer at hand

"It is because Captain Joncaire has said he wants Frazier's scalp. The Frenchman believes that the trader has much influence with Shingias, who refuses to take up the hatchet against the English of Virginia."

Of a verity was war already begun, if an officer of the French army could send out murderers at will, and I vowed then that if the time ever came when I should have Captain Joncaire for a target, he would not be allowed to doom other honest men to death.

There was nothing Running Deer or I could do to avert the danger which threatened the trader. Even though we had been beyond the Tightwees, nearer the settlement than they, it would not be possible for us to traverse the distance in time to give an alarm, for these Indians were all mounted, and could travel two miles while we were walking one.

Besides, we had our work already cut out for us in case we would save our own scalps. The forenoon must be spent in diligent work, with never a halt, if we would so far gain on the

enemy that it might be too much of a task for them to pursue.

It can well be supposed that we walked at our best speed, urging the horse into a trot if he failed to keep pace with us, and when noon came we halted only so long as was necessary to give the animal a breathing spell; we were in so much danger that whatever our condition we would not have been conscious of fatigue.

Running Deer felt certain the Tightwees would not discover that he had had a companion, until after the noon hour, and, therefore, we counted that if a pursuit was made, the enemy could not under the most favorable circumstances overtake us before sunset.

When night came, however, there was nothing to betoken the coming of the Indians, and I proposed that instead of camping until morning, we halt sufficiently long to give the horse a portion of corn, and then press forward again, claiming that by such means we might possibly tire out those in the rear, if perchance any were in pursuit.

The young Delaware, inured to long marches, was nothing loth, and after a halt of less than an hour we went on again, until arriving at the spot where Major Washington's party had divided into two sections.

Although much snow had fallen since that time when five men and all the horses halted there to discuss the situation, the trail was so broad that we could readily see it even in the gloom of night and, as a matter of course, we followed it.

It is not to be supposed that we did so as one would turn aside on a village street. There was a possibility that the Tightwees might be fooled by us, and instead of bearing sharply to the left as had the party with which was the Dutchman, we kept on, traveling toward Venango a full half mile, when Running Deer gave an exhibition of what he could do toward covering a trail.

It was comparatively an easy matter to hide one's footprints in the snow, and yet I question if I could have done so in such a thorough manner that the handiwork might not be apparent here or there; but the young Delaware effaced our trail completely until we had retraced our steps and advanced a quarter of a mile on the new course. It was as if we had never broken the surface of the snow which covered the tracks of the company I had been sent out to find.

"A Delaware can blind a Tightwee at any time," Running Deer said with an air of pride when the work was done to his satisfaction, and there was

nothing to prevent our pushing ahead at the best possible pace. "Those who have decided to take scalps from the Frazier settlement had better keep on their course, for nothing will be gained by coming back in search of us."

And I so far believed the statement as to lose all fear regarding that particular party of braves. We had "blinded" them beyond a doubt, and need not worry our heads further.

Until daylight we traveled at a sharp walk, and then I was so nearly exhausted that it seemed impossible I could proceed a single mile further; but when I proposed to make camp, urging that we need feel no alarm because of those whom we had tricked, Running Deer said persuasively:

"An hour's march further on, and we shall come to the stockaded house built by the white man Crosby, who is said to have come from Williamsburg. There we can rest and feast at the same time."

Now that he had spoken, I remembered having heard that one William Crosby, a trader of some means in Williamsburg, had gone into the wilderness to make a plantation, and many there were who predicted he would lose his scalp before harvesting the first crop, for it was said he had settled so near the unfriendly Indians as to tempt

them to pay him a visit at the first sign of trouble in any direction.

The idea of making a long halt in a dwelling among civilized people was so pleasing, that, weary though I had believed myself, I readily agreed to his proposal.

With the dawn of day, clouds began to cover the sky, and while I was yet speculating whether it could be possible to have another storm after the many days of rain and snow, the white flakes commenced to fall.

"We shall need a good shelter this day," Running Deer said as he looked about him. "Much snow will come this time, and a camp in the wilderness would soon be buried."

Indians are generally good weather prophets; but I laughed at such a prediction, saying in my folly:

"It has snowed or rained thirty-eight days out of forty-five, and the sun must shine a portion of the time."

"His face will be covered for many days yet," the young Delaware replied in a tone of conviction, and I held my peace, counting on laughing at him a few hours later when it had been seen that his storm was no more than a wind flurry.

I plodded on behind the horse, clutching at his

tail to prevent myself from falling, for my legs were so weary that it seemed impossible I could move one before the other; but holding up because the allurements of resting in the same house with white people were so entrancing.

I was like to have given over the attempt, however, before this last stage of the journey was come to an end, although perhaps my limbs might have served me better had I known how long this coming halt was to be.

When, finally, we arrived within sight of the plantation buildings surrounded by a stockade so stout that it might well have been called a fort, I sank down absolutely exhausted, and Running Deer helped me to the back of the horse, otherwise I might have lain there in the storm within sight of people ready and eager to extend hospitality.

When we entered the gate, which had been opened at our approach, the first person I saw was none other than Master Van Braam, and near him stood Master McQuire.

A meeting with them, whom I believed to be many miles further on, was so unexpected that I closed my eyes, believing myself beset by fever; but opened them very quickly when the man servant Steward said as he helped me from the horse:

"The major must have come to grief, else you would not be here in company with the Delaware whom we left at Venango."

Then it was that astonishment overpowered bodily exhaustion, and, turning to Master McQuire, I asked:

"Did you turn back to look for us?"

"Turn back, lad? Nothing of the kind. We came across this plantation of Master Crosby's when the horses had given out entirely. It was hardly a pleasant outlook to push on afoot, not overly well acquainted with the trail, therefore, like wise men, we decided to stop here till the beasts gathered flesh enough to carry us into the colony."

"And while you were living in plenty I came back over the trail alone to give you succor," I said in a tone so reproachful that all who heard me burst out laughing.

Then Master Crosby came forward as he said jovially:

"Get into the house, lad, you and the Indian. We've there what is more to my liking than this wind which goes to one's marrow, and snow that freezes. You can talk to your heart's content before the storm comes to an end, for there's promise of bad weather."

We went into the long apartment of the main building which served as kitchen, living and dining room, and there before a glowing fire which was built in a place of rocks and clay large enough to have served me as a camp, I looked around at the faces which I had thought never to see again.

The Dutchman, as was his wont, occupied the snuggest corner beside the fire, and near him sat the host with his two sons. On the opposite side, as if refusing to claim the interpreter of French as a comrade, were the two traders and the serving men, all of whom looked sleek and contented, as well they might in such quarters.

"Did you count on settling down here forever?" I asked, still in a daze of bewilderment because these men had brought their journey to so sudden an end, for they could not have made more than one day's march after we left them.

"They took my advice, as sensible men would, and decided to wait here till it was possible to go on with something like comfort," the host interrupted. "Their horses are getting into condition to carry them, and when they set out, it will be to ride the entire distance from here to Will's Creek, when you may say they are well within the borders of Virginia colony."

Running Deer, who was lying on a bearskin by

my side, looked as if he believed it was the part of wisdom to halt in such a rest-inviting place; but to me it seemed like a total disregard of duty, for the orders had been to push on at the best possible pace.

I was not the only curious one in that company, however. All my late companions were eager to learn how Major Washington had succeeded in his mission, and I was called upon to give an account of our movements from the hour we parted.

This I did, going into all the details with the result that it was late before the story came to an end, and by that time every person in the room, even including the Dutchman, looked with kindly eye upon the young Delaware who had proven himself such a true friend.

It was Master Crosby who proposed that we turn our attention to sleeping, and when he went into a small room partitioned off from one end of the large apartment, we acted upon his suggestion by rolling over upon the generous supply of furs our host's sons had spread down.

The wind was howling dismally, and at times wreaths of snow came down the wide chimney only to be converted into water, thus telling that a fierce storm was raging.

My eyes closed in slumber even as I asked my-

self whether it would be possible for Running Deer and I to continue our journey next morning, for now I was determined to join Major Washington as soon as possible, and when next I was conscious of anything a new day had dawned, although the darkness as of night yet filled the room.

Master Crosby had just come in after an early visit to the stables, and his report of the weather answered the question I had asked myself just before slumber overtook me :

"I have never seen the snow fall so fast. It is a man's work to get from here to the stables because of the drifts, and there will be neither coming to or going away from the plantation this day."

"It will snow to-morrow the same," Running Deer whispered in my ear. "We are like to stay here many days before one can make his way on the trail, and the Dutchman is with us.

For the instant I gave little or no attention to the last portion of the young Delaware's remark, so concerned was I at the idea that we were virtually imprisoned within the stockade, and I questioned our host regarding affairs out of doors.

"The snow is piled high against the doors and shutters ; the gate of the stockade is almost buried

out of sight. You are my guest, lad, this many a day, for I predict that no one will be able to go or come until a thaw sets the land free."

It almost frightened me, as I began to realize that it might be dreary waiting before the snow was melted, and then like a flash came into my mind Running Deer's words.

He was shut in the stockade with his mortal enemy, and I knew the Delaware sufficiently well to believe that he would quail at nothing in order to work out his revenge.

## CHAPTER XI.

### UNTIL THE THAW.

MASTER CROSBY'S guests were soon astir after he had made his report as to the weather, and each in turn, with the exception of Master Van Braam, seemed to think it absolutely necessary he should view the surroundings.

When I, following the general example, stepped outside the threshold, I was amazed at the great and sudden change in the scene. Between the dwelling and the stables was a huge drift of snow many feet high, around which Master Crosby had been forced to walk in order to get at his live-stock, since it was too deep to admit of his wading through. The gate of the stockade was completely hidden from view, and one shod with snow-shoes might have walked directly over it.

If this had made up the sum of the situation I should have said to myself that we could soon work our way out; but the storm was yet raging furiously; the icy particles blinded one's eyes, and sifted into every fold of the clothing.

The most expert in woodcraft would have been bewildered in that swirling, fleecy mass which stung like needles and yet looked soft as wool. I question if Master McQuire, the most experienced of our company, could have advanced in a straight line for a distance of an hundred yards, even though he had been familiar with all the landmarks, therefore it can be understood that he who took to the trail would have risked his life without hope of making any headway whatsoever.

Even if Running Deer and I had encamped in the thicket, with no covering save the boughs, I would have said we must remain in such place regardless of the danger that we might freeze, or be hopelessly buried until the storm had subsided.

When I turned back into the living-room where the women folks were bustling about preparing breakfast, forced to work by the light of pine knots because the drifts of snow, covering the windows, shut out every ray of daylight, I understood that we were prisoners for a certain time at least, and resolved to put behind me all anxiety regarding the future in order to enjoy to the utmost that pleasant abiding-place.

Master Van Braam, who had arisen from his bed of furs only to occupy the snuggest seat at one side of the fireplace, said when I approached,

as if the situation was entirely satisfactory to him :

"We are like to be here many a day, Davidson."

"Ay, and it seems to please you," I replied in no amiable tone, for it irritated me to see the fat Dutchman giving himself so entirely over to indolence.

"It is better here than on the trail, and one should be thankful because he has so good a shelter," he said with a grin, whereat I retorted :

"It may not be as pleasing to Master Crosby and his family, to care for a company of travelers when, if the storm holds much longer, they may run short of provisions."

"They cannot fail to be pleased at having plenty of companionship when, otherwise, they would be lonely," he said, and of a verity I believe he had persuaded himself that his society was of value to these settlers who were sharing the contents of their larder so generously with strangers.

I looked at the man for a moment, wondering if he would ever tire of toasting his shins before a fire, and actually envying him his selfish happiness, until I chanced to glance at Running Deer, and then I said again to myself that if we were long held prisoners by the snow we would not all leave the stockade alive.

The Delaware was crouching near the door like a panther making ready to spring, his eyes fastened upon the man who would have killed him but for me, and I believed he was, even then, considering how he might best work his revenge.

After the morning meal was come to an end, and the Dutchman had eaten the share of at least three men, I whispered to Running Deer that we would have a look at the stables, if for no other purpose than to stretch our legs.

Master Crosby, understanding when we went toward the door what we would do, cautioned us to have a care even as we crossed the inclosure, lest we grow bewildered in the fleecy downpour, and such warning was not needless, for, as I soon learned, it was most difficult to hold one's senses to their proper work.

Never before nor since have I seen such a raging storm with so much of snow accompanying it. I had heard of the colonists in Massachusetts being literally buried for weeks at a time; but until that morning I had believed such stories to be no more than travelers' tales. Now I could well understand how readily a strong man might unwittingly venture within the clutch of death.

Although the distance could not have been

more than an hundred yards as we circled around the huge drifts of snow in the middle of the inclosure, Running Deer and I were a full half hour in gaining the stables, and then we were breathing heavily as if after an exceeding hard race.

We found the horses warmly sheltered, and apparently enjoying themselves after the same fashion as was the Dutchman. The animals which were so nearly dead when Major Washington abandoned them, now looked fit for any journey, and I said to Running Deer in a tone of satisfaction :

"When it becomes possible to set out toward Will's Creek once more, we shall be able to ride at our ease."

"We have not started yet," the Delaware replied meaningly, and I understood the same as if he had said that we were like to remain a long while.

There was such a goodly store of provender in the stables that I knew Master Crosby could, if he felt so disposed, play the host for as long a time as we might be storm-bound, without impoverishing himself, and I hoped that the housewife's larder might make the same generous showing.

When we returned to the dwelling, after an

absence of two hours, we found the men seated around the fire as if resting from a long march.

The Dutchman was sending up great wreaths of tobacco smoke from a curiously fashioned Indian pipe, which I rightly concluded was the property of his host, and several of the company were aiding him in filling the room with the noisome vapor.

Running Deer and I made no effort to get places within the circle, but remained outside near where the women folks were working, and at every favorable opportunity I aided in the household tasks, for it seemed to me the height of selfishness for the men to take their ease while the young girls and their mother were toiling simply to fill the stomachs of strangers.

Because of the short time at my disposal, which is evidently limited now that rumors are floating in the air of our breaking camp here at Valley Forge to attack the Britishers, it is not possible for me to set down a record of each day's doings while we remained at Master Crosby's plantation, for it was early spring before we took our departure.

I must content myself with mentioning the most important events, and he who reads, if indeed this poor apology for a story ever has a reader, must picture to himself our company seated

around the generous fireplace day after day, talking of this or of that in our small world until every topic was worn threadbare.

The storm continued with but little change for four days, and then the stockade was so nearly buried that one might have passed near at hand without observing the huge posts which stood not less than twelve feet above the surface of the ground.

At intervals all of us, save Master Van Braam, had labored with wooden makeshifts for shovels, to keep open a passage from the dwelling to the well and the stable, until, when the sun rose again, to pass from one of these points to the other we walked in narrow alleys, the icy walls of which rose far above our heads.

Even with snow-shoes I question if we could have advanced many yards in either direction, for the tops of the trees were as bushes in the way, threatening to overturn or entangle any who ventured amid them.

Probably I was, of all that company, the most impatient to gain one of the Virginia settlements, and yet I never dreamed of making the attempt, so certain was it that to get even outside the stockade was impossible.

We were imprisoned now until, as Master Crosby

had said, the thaw came, and even then many days must elapse before the floods would have subsided sufficiently for us to cross the streams. The smallest creek would be a raging torrent when all that weight of snow was dissolved into water, and the rivers would be oceans, so that one might probably be able to traverse all the valleys in the wilderness only in boats.

I thought again and again of the preparations which we had seen made at Venango for the descent of the French upon the colony, and said to myself that this marvelous fall of snow was all in the favor of our enemies, who could descend the river in their stout boats on the top of the flood, while those on the lower levels would be held prisoners even as was our company at Master Crosby's plantation.

As may have been expected, we at the stockade discussed all these matters in their various bearings, hour after hour, and the only person who had no comment to make was Running Deer. While the remainder of the company speculated as to what might be going on at the French post or the Virginia towns, he sat silently gazing at the Dutchman, reminding me much of a cat who fastens her eyes upon a mouse which she can catch whenever the fancy seizes her.

During the first week or more I lived in constant fear lest the Delaware, regardless of the punishment which would speedily follow, should fall upon the interpreter of French, letting out his heart's blood, and yet Running Deer did nothing with which one could reproach him, for it is not forbidden by the laws of the colony that an Indian shall look upon a Dutchman.

It was during the beginning of our long tarry at the Crosby plantation that Master Van Braam behaved with civility, save in the matter of keeping to himself the best seat in front of the fire; but when all subjects of conversation had grown stale, and every man of us was weary of inactivity, he began to show the more disagreeable side of his nature.

He chose to exercise his supposed wit first on me, and I shut my teeth hard lest I make an angry reply; but promising myself that the time should presently come when I would repay the lazy Dutchman for his sneers.

Then, finding that I was disposed to bear it in silence, he tried his tongue on Master McQuire, and during a portion of one afternoon made him the point of all his senseless quips, until the trader, losing patience, said sharply and decidedly:

"Hark you, Master Van Braam! It is not to

my liking to furnish amusement for such as you. Keep your tongue from me and my affairs, or at the next witty remark I shall rub your nose in the embers until it is blistered to twice its now unnatural size."

The Dutchman had sufficient sense to realize that the trader would do exactly as he had said, and kept a bridle upon his speech until the following day, when he selected Running Deer as the butt for his quips.

It had been safer to trifle with Master McQuire, for by him the Dutchman would have been let off with nothing worse than a scorched nose; while I knew full well the young Delaware would wipe out the insults in blood.

With the hope of averting a tragedy I took Master McQuire aside, telling him of my fears, and begging that he would give Van Braam good advice; but he refused to interfere, saying as he turned away from me with a laugh which had in it far more of malice than of friendly spirit:

"Let the idiot make his bed unaided. I will not so much as turn my hand to save him from whatsoever the young Delaware chooses to inflict."

Then it was that I beckoned Running Deer to follow me to the stables, and once there, where

none might overhear our conversation, I urged, even begged him to pay no attention to anything the Dutchman might say.

"He shall use his tongue while it pleases him, for soon will it lie cold between his teeth," the young Indian said in a low tone, which gave me far more cause for alarm than if he had spoken threateningly.

"Surely you would not do harm to a man in the house of him who has treated you like a friend," I said imploringly.

"You believe that an Indian cannot strike a blow openly ; but must use his knife in the dark because his skin is red," he replied reproachfully.

"I am afraid you may lose your temper, and the deed will be done during a moment of anger, when punishment must follow."

"Do not fear," he said with a harsh laugh. "The Dutchman will die ; but it shall be in the white man's fashion."

Having thus spoken he returned to the house, as if eager to give Van Braam all the opportunity he wanted to fling insults, and I followed slowly, wondering as to the meaning of his words.

Nothing out of the ordinary occurred during this day, nor until another week had passed, and all

the while the Dutchman amused himself by telling imaginary stories concerning the cowardice of the Delawares, knowing that in no other way could he more thoroughly arouse Running Deer, who saw cause for pride in every member of his tribe.

We had been at the plantation of Master Crosby's a full four weeks before Van Braam's persistent efforts bore fruit, and then the end came so suddenly as to surprise even me, who had been fearing something of the kind.

The rain began to fall at sunrise that morning, and all our company hailed it as token that the thaw had come at last.

We were all seated at one side of the huge living room, with the exception of the Dutchman who yet remained in his cosy corner, for the weather had grown so mild that the heat of the fire was too great, and Master Crosby had come to an end of the story of his labors in making the plantation, told for at least the tenth time, when Van Braam suddenly asked, looking full at Running Deer :

"Did you have no trouble with the Indians?"

"Ay, some of the Tightwees, and a hunting party of Ottawas tried to make matters disagreeable ; but the boys and I soon convinced them

that it would be safest to keep away from the stockade when the Crosby family was behind it."

"What about the Delawares?"

"They have ever been my good friends, as they yet are to the colonists of Virginia."

"Do you believe they will hold true to the English if the French make war?"

"So long as Shingias and Half-King are alive, we need have no fear of them."

"The Delawares are women," Van Braam said deliberately, gazing at Running Deer meanwhile as if in the hope of provoking an angry reply. "They are afraid, like children, and hold to the Virginia colonists only because they dare not do otherwise; but wait till the French have come down the river, and then you will see that those two old fools of sachems whom you believe so honest, are as arrant liars and knaves as can be found in the country."

No one spoke as Van Braam concluded his insult. Instinctively we knew the bow was bent to the point of breaking, and that the Delaware would not longer hold his speech.

Yet Running Deer did not speak immediately, and Master Crosby took it upon himself to reprove the Dutchman for his words.

When he had finished, and before the interpre-

ter of French could reply even had he been so disposed, the young Delaware arose slowly, straightened his body until he stood stalwart and firm like a young tree, gazing meanwhile at his tormentor as he said deliberately and slowly :

"It is you who are the liar, Dutchman ! You, the servant of the English, are the fool, the knave ! Before Shingias and Half-King you are as the dirt on their moccasins ! You are a hog, a pole-cat, a coward, and at the same time a lying idiot upon whom I spit !"

Then, with his arms hanging by his side as if inviting a sudden attack, Running Deer stalked across the room and deliberately spat full in the Dutchman's face.

I remained like a statue, unable even to speak, much less move, but knowing all the while that the moment had come when Van Braam would pay the price of his insults, for it never entered my mind for a single instant that under any circumstances could the Dutchman worst the Delaware.

The other members of the company afterward told me they were in much the same condition of mind ; but Master McQuire declared that from the first he hoped the young Indian would kill the senseless interpreter of French.

Although Van Braam had shown himself a coward more than once since joining Major Washington's party, he had at this juncture a gleam of courage.

Leaping to his feet, his fat face gleaming white, he would have rushed upon Running Deer with empty hands; but the Delaware, drawing his knife, held him back as he said:

"I have promised that this killing shall be in the white man's fashion, for kill you I will, Dutchman! Dog! Liar!"

Master Crosby and McGuire had leaped forward when the interpreter sprang up; but both fell back at Running Deer's words, and Van Braam looked around him in perplexity, taking good care, however, not to come within reach of the keen-edged knife.

"What do you mean?" he cried, and one could almost fancy that his lips were flecked with foam, so great was his rage.

"For many days you have been saying, although in other words, that one of us must die," Running Deer replied calmly. "I have held my tongue between my teeth while you spat your venom on me; but now the time has come when I stand before you in the name of Shingias, and of Half-King! He who fights best shall live!"

"Do you mean that you will fight me?" Van Braam shrieked, and I saw a gleam of satisfaction light up his face.

"So that it be now—this hour, you shall have what you wish with which to guard your life."

"A fair offer!" Master McQuire cried. "The Delaware talks like a man, and I believe in his being allowed to settle this matter as he will. Van Braam has been free with his tongue for many days, and should now have a chance to show what he can do with weapons."

Master Crosby held his peace, and because of such silence I believed his sympathies were with Running Deer, as indeed would have been any honest man's after listening to the insults Van Braam had heaped upon him.

"If I had my sword!" the Dutchman cried, and Master Crosby's eldest son answered his wail by saying:

"I have one here; it was worn by my grandfather."

"Let me have it! Let me have it!" the interpreter roared. "This Indian cub shall get all he wants of the white man's fashion of killing!" and there was upon his face an exultant look, for there were few in the colony, so I

had heard it said, who could hold their own with him in fence.

Then it was I found my tongue, and running forward I cried out, turning to one after another of the company :

"It is not fair that Van Braam should hold a sword against Running Deer's knife. He is a fencing master ; he himself told me he had taught Major Washington the use of the blade, and in Williamsburg none will stand against him ! "

Master McQuire was about to interfere after I had spoken ; but the Delaware put an end to any squabbling by saying quietly :

"The lying Dutchman shall have what he wants, for it is to save his life. What matters a white man's sword against an Indian's knife, so that he who flings dirt at Shingias and Half-King wipes out the stain with his blood ? "

I had expected Master Crosby would do all that lay within his power to prevent a duel in his home ; but instead, he said as if the matter was settled beyond recall :

"If it so be the Indian is satisfied, then we should not cry out. You may get the sword, my son."

Then it was that Van Braam began to look about him for the most advantageous position,

believing, as indeed did I, that he was to fight there in the living-room, while Running Deer stood silent and motionless as if he had no interest in the coming encounter save that of a spectator.

Master Currin, however, took it upon himself to stand as second for the Delaware, and said quite sharply, addressing himself to Master Crosby :

"If the two are to fight as gentlemen should under such circumstances, let it not be that one has an advantage over the other, more than will exist in choice of weapons. Is it to your mind that the matter shall be settled here?"

By this time the women folks began to understand what was like to happen, and a great tumult arose, which may have had some influence upon Master Crosby's decision, for he said after a brief pause, as if he had been turning the matter carefully in his mind :

"We will go to the stable. The light is good there; but first, in order that trouble may not come of this affair in the future, let me ask you all if it is agreed that it is beyond our power to prevent a duel?"

"There must be some blood spilled, or we shall have worse on our hands than a duel," Master McQuire said quickly. "The Indian cannot remain

quiet after all that has been said since he came to this plantation, else would I, and all other right thinking men, set him down as a coward."

This remark settled the matter in the mind of our host, if indeed he had had any doubts, and from that moment the preparations for a duel went forward without delay.

Young Crosby brought out what appeared to be a goodly blade, and Van Braam allowed a smile to play over his face as he bent it in his hands, whereupon Running Deer asked :

"It pleases you, that white man's knife ?"

"It will serve you, my Indian cub, and short time is necessary for me to find your heart," the Dutchman replied brutally, and from that moment I no longer had any pity for the cowardly interpreter of French, who could lounge before the fire while others performed his rightful share of the labor.

Never for an instant did I even dream that Running Deer could succeed in killing Van Braam while the latter held a good blade in his hand ; but I believed that the Dutchman would not be able to cut the Indian down, therefore the matter would be no more than the spilling of bad blood, and I was confident the interpreter would get such a lesson as he deserved.

Yet I would have given everything I held dear to have persuaded the Delaware to let the matter drop, although I should afterward have despised him for cowardice; but at that time I could not bring myself to interfere because for the moment he seemed suddenly to have risen in station far beyond my sphere. Just then he was the peer of his companions.

A grand figure was the lad, as he stood there motionless as a statue, save for his eyes, which took in the lightest movement around him, as if the Indian feared some of the company might make a treacherous move, although he had good reason to believe that all, save alone the Dutchman, were his friends.

Master McQuire took it upon himself to conduct the affair, and, addressing himself to Master Currin as if the latter had been a regularly appointed second in a duel among gentlemen, he proposed that they go to the stables, as Master Crosby had suggested, where the screaming of the women would not disconcert the principals in the bloody drama about to be enacted

"If you care to aid a brute like him, lead the Dutchman in advance," Master Currin replied. "I will answer for it that the Delaware does not strike a blow until the word has been given;

but I can hardly say as much for the interpreter."

"There will be no foul work done this day," Master McQuire said meaningly, and then, touching Van Braam on the arm, he motioned the Dutchman to follow him.

The company marched out of the dwelling across the inclosure in a grave and orderly fashion; had it been the governor of Virginia who was about to give Monsieur de St. Pierre the satisfaction of crossing swords with him, the proceedings could not have been more decorous and according to rule.

By throwing open the doors at each end of the building, the central floor of the stable given over to the housing of the horses, was thoroughly well lighted, and Master McQuire, marching Van Braam to the further end of this space, said courteously as he turned his man to face the company:

"Since the sun does not shine, I fancy there can be no choice of positions, Master Currin; but if your man is particular, we will settle that matter in proper manner."

"Running Deer gives Van Braam permission to stand wheresoever he pleases," the trader said after a brief consultation with the young Indian. "The only thing which he insists upon is that

once the word has been given, there shall be no halting or interference until one or the other is disabled."

The Dutchman nodded carelessly as if to say he was quite willing to agree to this, and cut and thrust at the empty air to show how dexterous he was in the use of the weapon.

I, who had heard so much regarding Van Braam's skill with the sword, knew that Running Deer must make the fight of his life if he would come off best; but the Indian himself appeared to be the least interested person there.

He was dressed much like all the company save Van Braam, in deer-hide hunting shirt and leggins, and, so far as I could see, had no other weapon than the knife which he had thrust back in his belt when we left the dwelling.

The Dutchman wore a sort of uniform, the coat of which was doubled across his breast and ornamented with many buttons, forming, as it seemed to me, a very effective shield in such a contest as was about to begin.

Master Currin also noted this arrangement of garment which gave to the bigger man a decided advantage, and would have insisted on its being taken off, but that Running Deer interrupted him impatiently as he exclaimed:

"He shall do as he pleases from this moment. I care not that he covers his heart twice; it is so small that I should fail of striking it if I tried. He lives only in his stomach, and I shall have no trouble in finding that."

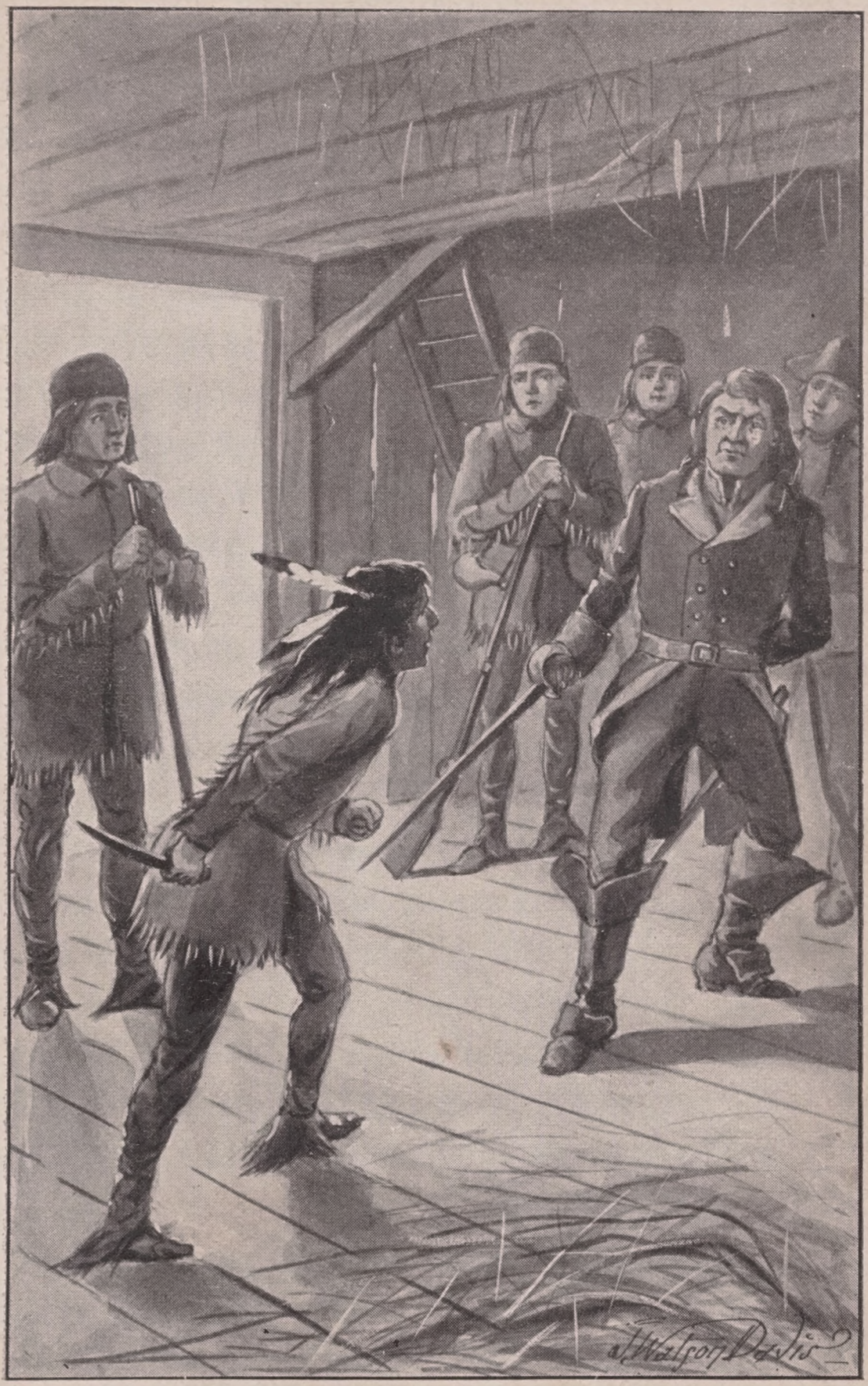
Then Master McQuire, seemingly grown impatient because the duel was delayed, called out to know if the two were ready.

Van Braam replied that he was, and Running Deer unsheathed his knife, the blade of which was no more than twelve inches long.

"If the Dutchman can fence as Davidson says, he should have no trouble in running the Delaware through at the first lunge," I heard Steward whisper to Jenkins, and almost at the same instant Master McQuire gave the word for the battle to begin.

Now the impassive look was gone from Running Deer's face, and in its stead was come one of such ferocity as I had never before seen. He stood leaning slightly forward on his bent left leg, his eyes fixed upon Van Braam with an intentness that was painful to witness, and his right hand, in which was the knife, held slightly behind his body.

The interpreter had assumed a swordsman's attitude, and was ready to parry or thrust as



Step by step Van Braam moved toward his antagonist, who remained rigid as stone. Page 267.

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occasion required; but I fancied that the expression on the face of the Delaware shook his nerves not a little.

Running Deer stood waiting for an attack, but making no sign of beginning one, and after I might have counted twenty, the interpreter advanced, the point of his blade held out stiffly in front of him; but I knew that behind the handle was a wrist of iron which could twirl the steel until it appeared to be a solid circle.

Step by step Van Braam moved toward his antagonist, who remained rigid as stone, and then, with a suddenness which caused me to cry aloud because of sheer nervousness, the battle was ended.

Regarding Running Deer's maneuver I can only say that it appeared to me as if he leaped in the air like a panther, coming down behind Van Braam's guard, and on the instant blood oozed from the Dutchman's coat as he slowly sank down, until his knees touched the floor, when the body toppled over sideways, where it remained motionless.

The fencing master, who had counted himself equal to any enemy when he held in his hand a sword, did not have time to make a single thrust before the death blow had been given, and I am

inclined to believe with Master McQuire, who afterward said in my hearing, that "in his opinion the Dutchman did not know he was struck until he learned the fact in the next world."

## CHAPTER XII.

### AT WILL'S CREEK.

IMMEDIATELY he had delivered the fatal blow, Running Deer stepped back a dozen paces or more, and stood with folded arms as if waiting to hear whether any one would accuse him of foul play.

As for the company who had witnessed the short duel, all stood literally paralyzed with astonishment, so lightning-like had been the movements of the Delaware, and a full minute elapsed before one among us recovered sufficient presence of mind to take any steps toward learning whether life yet remained in that inert mass which had so lately been aquiver with anticipations of victory.

Then it was Master McQuire who stepped forward as if yet partially bewildered, and raised Van Braam's head.

There was little need for him to make further investigations, or to announce his opinion.

We could all see that the interpreter was dead, and the ominous-looking stain on his coat told

that the Delaware's knife had struck the heart fairly.

Master McQuire stepped back and looked inquiringly at Master Crosby, who hesitated before saying slowly :

"It was a fair fight. Van Braam believed he had the advantage by holding a sword, and since he allowed that any kind of an attack was permitted, the Delaware has kept well within his rights."

And the others nodded their heads in assent; I alone remained motionless because the horror of it all was so strong upon me that I could not have raised my hand.

When he understood that the spectators were not disposed to cast any blame upon him, Running Deer walked slowly across the inclosure to the house, and when we returned he was seated in one corner of the room, calm and impassive as if he alone of all that company had remained afar from any scene of excitement.

Our host and Master McQuire took it upon themselves to care for the lifeless clay, and the others of the party followed me, who was the first, after Running Deer, to leave the stable.

During the remainder of that day, and for the next, there was no indulgence in story-telling or

converse of a light nature. It might have been supposed that the frontiersmen, accustomed to scenes of violence, would have passed over the fatal duel as an incident; but the fact that we had been shut up in the stockade with the man who was dead, for many days, and that the beginning of the end had come so suddenly, struck them more forcibly than even the massacre of an entire family would have done.

Well, it is best that I hasten over the dreary days which followed before we were able to leave our hospitable refuge, and say that the snow held us prisoners until the first week in April, when we set out after such a long delay, on the return which should have been made many weeks before.

Toward the last of March the anxiously expected thaw set in, and the entire wilderness was a raging flood, save where the hills and mountains upreared their heads like islands in a sea.

As a matter of course we were forced to wait until the waters had in a measure subsided, and then was begun the tramp which we hoped would come to an end with our arrival at Williamsburg.

It goes without saying that the horses were in fine condition for the journey; we gave them plenty of exercise in the inclosure of the stockade during the last few weeks of our stay, in order that

they might be hardened in a measure for the work, and when finally we set off it was like taking leave of old and tried friends, for we had been with Master Crosby and his family until it seemed as if they were of our own flesh and blood.

Running Deer had not spoken of the duel since the moment when the interpreter fell dead, nor had either of us mentioned the subject in his hearing.

When we made our preparations for departure he joined in the labor as if in his mind, at least, there was no possible reason why any plan, so far as he was concerned, should be changed because of what had occurred.

He and I rode side by side when we set out, and at the beginning of the journey I asked if it was in his mind to go as far as Williamsburg with us.

"I will stand before your major," he said gravely. "If I went to my own village like one who would hide, then might the people of Virginia say that the Delawares had broken their promises by killing a white man, charging my deed upon all my tribe. Major Washington shall say that there is no longer peace between us, before I turn my back upon him."

All of which was to the effect that Running Deer held the English of Virginia in such high

esteem, and considered himself so firmly bound by the treaty his people had made, that he intended to be adjudged by our commander for his share in the duel, before allowing the matter to rest.

It struck me as strange that he should be so particular now in the matter of taking up the hatchet, or in seeming to do so, against the colonists, when at our first meeting after the journey began from Williamsburg, he was on the war-path against us.

I set it down, however, to Half-King's influence, and believed that sachem had given the young brave some very good advice, as I afterward came to know was the fact.

Difficult indeed did we find it to advance, and three days out of every four were spent in building rafts to ferry the horses across swollen streams. I was of the opinion that it would have been wiser had the animals been left at Master Crosby's settlement until the spring was well advanced.

My advice in the matter was not asked, however, nor would it have been followed had I given it, and I labored with the others until nearly a month was spent in traversing a distance which, later in the year, we should have been able to cover in five or six days.

Then we were come to Will's Creek, where

awaited us a great surprise, and one which was the means of changing the whole course of my life.

Major Washington was at this point with three companies of newly enlisted soldiers, numbering in all about one hundred and twenty-five men, and war had been declared against the French—that war which has since been called the "French and Indian war," and, as all know, raged seven years before peace was declared.

Our commander had arrived at this place the day before our company came in, and was quite as much astonished to meet us as we were to see him at the head of a small army.

I was summoned to an interview first, probably because I was the last to leave him, and if a connected account was to be given of the wanderings of his escort, then must it begin with me.

Therefore it was that I found myself forced to tell the story of the duel which resulted in Van Braam's death, and this was a tale which I knew full well the major would not relish, for he had set his face sternly against such encounters.

However, I acted the friend to Running Deer by telling in detail the provocation which the interpreter had given the Delaware, and by laying great stress upon the young Indian's desire to

stand honestly and squarely before the man whom he looked upon as his commander for the time being.

When my story had been told no comments were made. Then I learned that the major arrived at Williamsburg on the 16th day of January, having been absent on his mission eleven weeks, and suffered in that time as much of hardship as would ordinarily fall to a man's lot in a year's travel.

One by one the other members of our party were called upon to give an account of his experiences, and when all had borne witness to the matter, Running Deer was summoned.

What passed between our major and the Delaware, I never knew ; but the matter was settled satisfactorily to both parties, as I have every reason to believe, for the young Delaware has, since that day, followed our commander into danger and out again, and is here at Valley Forge doing better service with less complaint than the majority of us white men.

That evening, when we were encamped in a brush hut which Steward and Jenkins set about building immediately we arrived, one of the newly enlisted soldiers, a friend of Master McQuire's from Alexandria, gave us a reasonably clear ac-

count of all that had happened while we were held prisoners in the wilderness by the snow.

Because of the fact that Master McQuire's friend was not acquainted with all the particulars, and in order that there shall be no mistake in what is of importance if one would understand everything which had been done by our commander, I shall set down here what I have since seen printed in a book regarding the beginning of the war.

"The intentions and movements of the French being now understood (by the report brought by Major Washington) Governor Dinwiddie thought the occasion demanded prompt and energetic action. He called his council together, and it was resolved to enlist two hundred men, with directions to march to the Ohio, and build one or two forts there before the French should be able to descend the river in the spring.

"Washington was intrusted with the chief command of the troops, and he advised that Captain Trent be given authority to enlist an hundred men among the traders and settlers, who should begin with all speed to build a fort at the Forks of the Ohio.

"The major was ordered to Alexandria as a convenient situation for the rendezvous of the

force, and for superintending the transportation of supplies and the cannon to be mounted in the new fort.

"Messengers were despatched to the southern Indians, the Catawbas and Cherokees, inviting them to join in repelling a common enemy who had already engaged in their behalf the powerful nations of Chippewas and Ottawas. It was believed that the Tightwees were ready to forsake the French because the latter had made more promises than they could well keep, and there was no question as to the friendship of the Delawares so long as such sachems as Shingias and Half-King were alive.

"When the Virginia Assembly met, they voted ten thousand pounds toward supporting the expedition to the Ohio. The Carolinas also voted twelve thousand pounds. With this aid, and the promises of more, Governor Dinwiddie determined to increase the number of men to three hundred, to be divided into six companies. Colonel Joshua Fry, he who was one of Virginia's Commissioners for making the treaty with the Delawares, was appointed to the command of the whole, and Major Washington was made lieutenant-colonel.

"To quicken the military zeal of the people, and give alacrity to the recruiting service, Gov-

ernor Dinwiddie issued a proclamation granting two hundred thousand acres of land on the Ohio river, to be divided among the troops who should engage in the expedition, and releasing the same from quit-rents for fifteen years. One thousand acres were ordered to be laid off near the fort at the Forks of the Ohio, for the use of the soldiers doing duty there, to be called garrison lands.

"Although but feebly sustained by their neighbors, the Virginians did not abate their exertions. The enlistments went on with considerable success. Colonel Washington continued his headquarters at Alexandria till the beginning of April. Two companies had been collected at that place, with which he marched to Will's Creek, where he arrived on the 20th, having been joined on the way by another company under Captain Stephen. The march was slow and fatiguing, on account of the roughness of the roads, and the difficulty of procuring wagons to convey the baggage."

That which I have copied out gives a better idea of the situation than could words of mine. It will be seen that Governor Dinwiddie understood the reply to his message by General de St. Pierre, as meaning war, and the colony was making ready

for it, allowing that hostilities had already been begun by the advance of the French as far as Venango.

It is hardly necessary for me to say that our company thoroughly discussed the situation in all its bearings during that first evening in camp.

Before making ready for the night it was agreed that we should go in a body to Colonel Washington next morning, and offer ourselves as recruits in whatsoever station he might choose to assign us, so that we remained together.

This we decided upon in order to give Running Deer a fair chance; he had the desire to serve with white men, instead of joining his tribe, and Master McQuire believed that if we did as was proposed, the Delaware would be accepted as a volunteer on the same footing as the others.

Before we had made ready next morning for a visit to headquarters, a fugitive came into camp at full speed, and the manner of his arrival was such as to arouse the curiosity of all.

On being stopped by the sentinels and carried before the captain of the guard, he demanded to be taken to headquarters without delay, declaring that he was the bearer of most important news, and, as can well be imagined, everything else was driven from our minds until, an hour later,

when an explanation of his appearance at Will's Creek was whispered around the encampment.

The newcomer was Ensign Ward, of the company under command of Captain Trent.

This last named officer had raised his volunteers according to instructions; marched them at once to the Forks of the Ohio, and set about building the fort. The work was well under way when Captain Trent and his lieutenant, with sixty men, set out on a scouting expedition because word had been brought in that a party of Ottawas was on the war-path heading for the nearly completed fortification.

Ensign Ward was left in charge of the works, with forty-one men under his command, and on the second day a body of French troops descended the river from Venango, consisting of one thousand men, with no less than eighteen pieces of cannon, sixty batteaux and three hundred canoes.

This force was under the command of one Captain Contrecoeur, who called upon the colonists to surrender, threatening to take forcible possession of the fort without giving quarter, if his summons was not immediately obeyed.

There was no alternative. The captain and lieutenant being absent, Ensign Ward acceded to the articles of capitulation, and gave up the

fort, being allowed upon this consideration to retire with all his men.

In the hope that Colonel Washington had arrived at the appointed rendezvous, he came with all speed to Will's Creek, pushing on in advance of his force that the news might be imparted without unnecessary delay.

Now I will copy once more from the book which has printed in it the whole story of this campaign, as told from a military point of view, and then can be understood in what a situation our commander suddenly found himself :

"To the little army under Colonel Washington, as yet amounting to no more than three small companies, this was a critical moment. They occupied an outpost, beyond which there was no barrier to oppose the formidable French force on the Ohio. Even a detachment, well armed and disciplined, might surround and cut them off. Colonel Fry had not joined them, and the whole responsibility rested on the lieutenant-colonel.

"He instantly sent expresses to the Governors of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, setting forth his weak and exposed condition, and calling for reinforcements. He then held a council of war. Notwithstanding the dangers that threatened on every side, it was resolved to push boldly

into the wilderness, to clear and prepare the road as they advanced, and, if possible, to penetrate to the Monongahela at the mouth of Redstone Creek, there to erect a fortification. The soldiers would thus be employed, their apprehensions quieted, the bane of idleness avoided, and a way opened for the march of the troops in the rear."

During four and twenty hours after the arrival of Ensign Ward our commander was so entirely engaged with serious matters that we, who counted on offering our services, could not get speech with him, therefore we remained quietly in the camp of boughs, determined to wait as long as might be necessary in order to accomplish the enlistment in a proper manner.

It was after the council of war had been held, and Master McQuire was making the proposition that we ask one of the captains to get for us an interview, when we saw the commander with head bent and hands clasped behind him, walking slowly toward where we were encamped.

Our time had come, and we could not have asked for a better opportunity. With one accord we urged Master McQuire to act as spokesman, and he stepped out just as the commander had arrived opposite our shelter.

Colonel Washington greeted the trader cordially, and after speaking on ordinary matters a moment, Master McQuire made known our desires, stating boldly that we were of the mind to enlist in a body to the end that Running Deer should have equal chance with us.

"I can well understand your desire to be together," our commander said with one of his rare smiles, "and it is well that you hold by the Delaware, since he cast in his lot with yours when at least two sachems of his tribe had given proof of favoring the French. You may enlist as an independent body of scouts, if it so please you. Master McQuire shall be in command, and Steward and Jenkins will attend to the camp duties. Your horses and general equipment belong to the colony, and it is only necessary that you be sworn into service in due form."

If the colonel had cudgeled his brain for a week trying to devise some method of rewarding us who had accompanied him through the wilderness, he could not have hit upon anything which would have given more pleasure. The hardships which we had endured, and the dangers we had confronted in company, bound us together more firmly than the most exacting oath could possibly have done, and I for one was inclined to thank

the Frenchmen for giving us an opportunity to remain close comrades.

In order to wind up the business at once, for, threatened as we were by the enemy, a call to arms might be heard at any moment, the colonel administered with due form the oath of fealty to the king and the colony, after which we were supposed to be regular soldiers, although I dare venture to say that never one of us could have taken the first step in the manual of arms.

Then our commander, hinting that the entire force might break camp next morning, and explaining how we should proceed to draw such rations as the colony provided for her defenders, went his way, leaving us at liberty to congratulate each other upon the satisfactory position which we occupied with the "army."

Running Deer, in common with all of his kind, was not given to making any very great display when pleased with affairs generally ; but on this morning he came nearer exhibiting signs of joy than I had ever known of his doing. He had been made the equal of his white companions so long as we should serve under Colonel Washington, and such fact he knew would, in addition to the satisfaction he himself derived from it, give great pleasure to Half-King.

And now that I am come to that portion of my story when I became a soldier in name if not in training, the details must be hurried over in order that there be both time and space in which to tell of the serious work connected with this, the first campaign in the long, bloody war that followed.

On the day after our company was made a portion of the little army, the troops were set in motion on what proved to be a most tedious march, for trees were to be felled, bridges made, marshes filled up, and rocks removed in order to render possible the passage of our baggage train.

The progress was no more than a single mile on the first day, and when one saw for himself the obstacles to be overcome, such an advance really seemed quite rapid.

Before going on with a record of how we fought the wilderness inch by inch as we pressed onward toward where the enemy might be found, it is well that I explain why our commander made no effort to retake the fort at the Forks of the Ohio, and also why I have failed to set down an account of what befell the company which was captained by Master Trent.

A council of war was held by Colonel Washington and his principal officers very shortly after Ensign Ward came into the encampment with

his startling information, and it was decided, quite properly as I viewed the matter, that it would be little less than folly to make any attempt at retaking the fort; certainly not until after Colonel Fry with the remainder of the army had joined us. Even then, unless the ensign had allowed his fears to distort the facts, we would be in no wise a match for the enemy, since one could not truly say that the French had weak stomachs for fighting.

As for the colonists who were said to be close upon Ensign Ward's heels, striving to gain the encampment lest the enemy take it into his head to pursue, they were all men well versed in woodcraft, and fully able to take care of themselves, therefore it would have been a waste of time and labor to sent out a squad to escort them in, yet they had not made an appearance at the end of our second day's laborious march, and the general belief was that they had been so thoroughly alarmed by the capture of the fort as to lose their heads for the time being. As a matter of fact, it was many days before we saw them all.

The men under Colonel Washington's command advanced upon the many and serious obstacles which nature had placed in their path, with courage and industry worthy a better enemy; but

before a week had passed the rations began to grow scanty, and shortly afterward the supply of bread failed entirely.

We had arrived at the bank of the Youghiogheny river when the provisions ran so low that every man among us felt the pangs of hunger most sensibly.

At this point it was necessary to build a bridge of considerable strength in order to admit of our advance, and at the same time leave open a way of retreat should we find the enemy too strong for our small force.

It was impossible the men could work without food, and the officers having charge of the commissary department, who were really to be blamed for the condition of affairs, went back to hasten forward the supplies.

The bridge-building progressed as rapidly as could be expected when the laborers were suffering from lack of food, and during this time of delay our commander resolved to learn whether it might not be possible for the troops to sail down the river, as some of the enlisted men declared was the case.

Our independent company, as we were pleased to call ourselves, was ordered to take the commander on the short voyage of exploration, and

Running Deer, who claimed to be familiar with the river, volunteered to act as pilot ; but he declared at the outset that loaded boats could not make the passage without encountering the hardship of carrying the entire outfit around the shoals and rapids, which would cost much more severe labor than an advance through the woods.

To me was left the task of making ready a boat, and I stored it with all I could get in the way of provisions, determined that our commander should have a full stomach no matter how hungry the rest of us might be.

Masters McQuire and Currin, with Running Deer and myself, made up the crew, and early the next morning we set out on a voyage which was continued for thirty miles, when we arrived at a series of rapids which rendered further progress in a boat impossible.

We had, however, learned that it would be out of the question to attempt a passage by water, for the river was choked by rocks and shoals during nearly the entire distance over which we passed.

At the close of the first day's voyaging we encamped on the river-bank in most comfortable fashion, and next morning began the return journey, when we were forced to labor energetically

during every moment of daylight, until seventy hours were spent in going over the same distance which we had made with the current in one-seventh of that time.

When, finally, we rejoined the army, it was to find that the bridge across the Youghiogheny was completed, and our people had advanced three miles or more on their weary way.

And we returned in good time, for as we stepped out of the canoe a Delaware was seen coming toward us, and on meeting Colonel Washington he halted respectfully until our commander addressed him.

As a matter of course, I was called upon to act as interpreter, and that which the Indian told me brought the cold chills of fear to my spine.

He had come as a messenger from Half-King, who was then with a party of braves near the Monongahela river, with the information that a large company of French was marching down to meet us with hostile intent. The friendly sachem declared that the enemy outnumbered us nearly two to one, and announced his intention of joining us without loss of time.

The messenger had hardly more than finished delivering his budget of news, when another Delaware arrived, having been sent from Half-King's

camp six hours later than the first Indian, and he brought word that the enemy was at that time within fifteen miles of the sachem's camp.

"Then we can reckon on seeing the Frenchmen within four and twenty hours," Master McQuire said in a low tone to Currin, "and we've scant time in which to prepare for their reception."

That our commander was of the same opinion could be seen after he had dismissed the messengers with presents of money, for he said to the traders, speaking hurriedly :

"Do you know of a convenient place near at hand where we can meet these gentlemen who propose to wrest the country from its rightful owners ?"

Master McQuire and Currin conferred together a few moments, during which time the commander sent Running Deer to the officers who had been left in charge of the troops, to inquire if the commissaries had yet supplied us with bread.

Then it was that Master McQuire said decisively :

"You must get your troops to a place called the Great Meadows, if you count on throwing up any breast-works. There you can dispose of the men as best pleases you."

"And how far away are these meadows?"

"Perhaps three miles."

Colonel Washington hastened forward to where his officers had halted, and without parley ordered that the troops be urged on at full speed to the meadows, traveling by night as well as day, at the same time enjoining upon them the necessity of moving the cannon and the baggage with equal swiftness.

Then it was that Running Deer came up with word that the men were now well supplied with provisions, the commissaries having joined the force four and twenty hours previous.

By some means our people knew, almost as soon as did the commander, that the enemy was near at hand, and no spur was needed to urge them to extraordinary exertions, for all understood that if we were attacked in the forest, before preparations had been made for defense, the French would make short work of us.

I wish it were possible for me to paint with a pen the picture which presented itself from this moment until we were arrived at the place spoken of by the traders.

Every man worked to the utmost of his strength, and without heed to fatigue, for he was laboring to save his own life, and the unwieldy

carts were forced onward over swamp or ledge that would have appeared, two hours before, to be impassable until after much time had been spent in clearing the way.

Foremost of the force marched fifty men hewing trees and hauling the timbers out of the path; then came twenty with shovels and picks to smooth in some slight degree the most difficult places. The remainder of the small army tugged and strained at the carts and wagons, pulling and hauling with the horses, and our advance was so rapid, as compared with the manner in which we had been moving, as to seem almost wonderful.

Never a man shirked at that time; there was no distinction of rank; Colonel Washington's shoulder was at the wheels of the vehicles as often as was that of the lowest camp follower, and every officer in the troop followed his example.

The result of so much industry was that we came out into a vast field, which had been given the name of "Great Meadows," at least four and twenty hours before the most sanguine had believed the journey could be accomplished; but even then no man was allowed opportunity to rest, save as he might do so while eating his rations.

Bushes were to be cleared away, intrenchments thrown up, and the cannon mounted. We were

to put ourselves in the best possible position for defense, and in the shortest time, therefore, as during the forced march, every person was called upon to do his utmost.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AT GREAT MEADOWS.

I HAVE seen a printed description of Great Meadows, which it may be well to set down here, since I cannot hope to give in my own words as clear an account of the place where we suffered defeat, but without dishonor.

"The Great Meadows, where Fort Necessity was built, is a level bottom, cleft by a small creek. Around it are hills of a moderate height and gradual ascent. The bottom is about two hundred and fifty yards wide where the fort was erected. It was a point well chosen, being about one hundred yards from the upland or wooded grounds on one side, and about an hundred and fifty on the other. The creek afforded water for the fort. On the side nearest the wood were three entrances, protected by short breast-works or bastions. The site of this fort is three or four hundred yards south of what is now called the National Road, four miles from the foot of Laurel Hill, and fifty miles from Cumberland, at Will's Creek."

It is not my purpose to spend many words in telling of what we did after arriving at the spot where it had been decided to throw up an intrenchment, that we might be able to hold our own against the great force which Half-King declared was marching against us.

One can well fancy that every man, including the officers, labored industriously and without cessation until the rude fortification was reared, and then by general agreement we called the earth-works "Fort Necessity," for of a verity the "mother of invention" had demanded its erection.

Inside the embankment we erected rude huts to shelter us from the sun by day and the dew at night, as if we counted on remaining there many days, and our "independent company" had but just completed its quarters when Colonel Washington came up, without ostentation, but much as any comrade might have done.

Calling Master McQuire aside he spoke with him privately a few moments, and then turned away, leaving the remainder of our company in a fine state of curiosity regarding the reason for the visit.

We are to go out on a scout, and mounted," Master McQuire said carelessly, as if to such as we had proved ourselves to be, a dangerous duty

was of but little moment. "From the messages sent by Half-King, it is certain a large body of Frenchmen are near at hand, and now has come the time when their whereabouts should be known exactly."

If that which I have already written has been understood by whosoever may have read it, there is little need for me to say that I am not given to bloodthirstiness, and yet the information that we were to go in search of the enemy filled me with pleasure, for I had become heartily tired of handling a pick and shovel.

Running Deer's eyes glistened when Master McQuire spoke, and I knew full well there was in his heart the thought that now was come the time when he might prove his right to be held on an equality with white comrades.

I believe that all of us would have been better satisfied had the word been given to set out on foot, for then might more complete work be done; but it was not for us to take exception to any order issued by our commander, more especially after he had shown so thoroughly that he was a master in such tasks as the colony of Virginia had given him to do.

Whether Colonel Fry would please us as well, when he took the chief command, was a question

we had often asked each other, and we burned with the desire to forward the work so far as possible before that officer should arrive, in order that our leader might be given the more credit.

While Master McQuire selected the horses from among the sorry lot of animals which were worn to skeletons by hauling baggage wagons and cannon through the forest, and our own steeds that had been put in such good condition during the long halt at Master Crosby's plantation were forced to share the arduous labor with the others, the remainder of our company made ready the arms and ammunition, not forgetting a scanty supply of rations in event of being absent from the fort longer than was contemplated by the orders.

An hour before sunrise we were prepared to set out, and from the expression on the faces of those few who gazed at us as we rode slowly away from the fortification, it could be understood that none envied us the distinction of being thus selected as scouts; but we were well pleased at the opportunity to be of particular service.

Having traveled so long in company it was well known to each that the others might be depended upon to do full duty, therefore no plan of action was decided upon.

We were simply to learn where the enemy could

be found, and this would require no little skill in woodcraft, because of the fact that doubtless in advance of the force were Ottawas and Tightwees in considerable numbers.

Master McQuire led the way, as was his right since the colonel had named him our leader, and the remainder of the party followed close behind at a walk.

Until the day dawned we moved at a snail's pace, for we were not minded to stumble over the enemy in the darkness ; but when it was possible to distinguish surrounding objects clearly Master McQuire urged his horse into a trot, and we rode five or six miles before drawing rein.

Then it was that Indian signs could be plainly seen, and we knew the time had come for real work.

The horses were led into a thicket and hobbled, and Running Deer and myself ordered to circle around the halting-place with the idea that we might succeed in coming across a trail which could be followed with advantage.

The thought came into my mind as we set out that it was useless to send us both on such an errand ; the Delaware was so far my superior in the work that I should be forwarding matters by keeping close at his heels, because that which

might be a blank to me was as a printed book to him.

Running Deer understood this quite as well as did I, and it pleased him because I was free to admit the fact; but he would not suggest that it might be better for him to take charge of the business, therefore I said, as if there could be but one opinion on the subject:

"It is for you to lead the way; I can do little more than stand by to give assistance in case it may be needed."

"If it is Ottawas we have to do with, you have a full share of the work, for their trick is to let an enemy get in advance that they may strike from behind. Keep twenty paces distant, and have your eyes open for the skulkers."

As he had said so I did, and in such order we went forward slowly and cautiously, for one could readily see that the enemy had been in the vicinity but a short time previous. There were bold trails standing out plainly here and there as if several Indians had been searching the ground closely, and I was mightily puzzled to understand the meaning of so much traveling back and forth.

We began circling around the halting-place when we were fifty yards or more from it, therefore must of necessity cover considerable ground

before returning to the starting-point, and Running Deer took up the task as if it was one of sweet pleasure.

When we had advanced perhaps an hundred yards it was no longer possible to see the network of trails which had caused the halt, and I said to myself that if the Delaware was wise he would lessen the circle, because of the probability that we were moving directly away from our enemies, if, perchance, any yet remained in that vicinity.

So positive was I of this that I quickened the pace slightly, intending to advise him to turn back, when suddenly I saw what was hardly more than a shadow flit across my line of vision.

We had come upon the enemy when I believed there was no longer any danger, and from that moment, so I said to myself, Running Deer's skill in woodcraft should never be questioned by me.

Now was my work cut out, and extremely difficult did it appear. I could not call aloud to warn my comrade, else might I have brought down an overwhelming number of foes, and it would be impossible to join him without coming in contact with the fellow who sneaked along behind, intent on murder.

It was my duty to remove the danger which hung close about Running Deer, and yet do so

in such a fashion that an alarm might not be given.

I crept forward rapidly, straining my eyes and ears as only a man can when he knows that if one or the other play him a trick his life will pay the forfeit, and yet never a glimpse could I get of that skulker.

The cold sweat of fear and anxiety burst from every pore of my skin, for I knew full well that even while I was thus vainly searching, the knife or the hatchet which was to take Running Deer's life might be uplifted.

We had left our muskets at the place where the horses were halted, for on such work as that assigned to us a noisy weapon might be more dangerous than serviceable, and I had only a hunting knife with which to make an attack.

It seemed to me that never was I more clumsy or slow than when so much depended upon my movements, and but little was needed just then to make of me as veritable a coward as Master Van Braam had ever shown himself.

What perplexed me most sorely was that with all my efforts I could not come up with the Delaware, and I was beginning to believe that in my stupidity I had passed him, when the noise as of a struggle among the underbrush caused me to

leap forward as does a horse when the spurs are struck deep into his flank.

Just at that point the foliage was so dense that one could not distinguish objects half a dozen paces in advance, and I was forced to plunge forward swiftly at the risk of literally stumbling over those who were fighting silently for life itself.

A thicket of small spruce bushes appeared to be the screen which hid from view the combatants, and I was in the act of running blindly into it when something—I cannot even to this day guess what gave the warning—caused me to glance suddenly behind me.

There, not more than three paces distant, was an Ottawa Indian advancing with upraised hatchet, and but for the quick turn caused by instinct, if you will, my life would have paid the forfeit of carelessness.

Like a flash of light came to me an understanding of the situation.

This Indian confronting me was the one whose shadow I had seen, and Running Deer was grappling with a new foe whom he had come upon while the other was dogging his footsteps. I had overrun my man, who, pursuing the tactics of his tribe, had allowed me to pass that he might strike from behind.

It can readily be understood that I did not waste even the slightest fraction of time in speculating upon how the situation had come about. The thoughts I have just set down darted through my mind as the lightning flashes, and at the same second I leaped forward, swerving quickly aside in order to escape the blow which I knew full well would be dealt almost instantly.

Nor was I mistaken as to what the Ottawa would do. As I sprang toward him he hurled the weapon, and but for the fact of my having swerved from the direct course, my portion of the battle would have been ended in a twinkling.

As it was, however, by practicing the trick which had been taught me by the Delawares, I bent my body low as I leaped forward, and came up inside his guard, much as Running Deer had done when he fought Master Van Braam.

Immediately he flung the hatchet at my head the Ottawa drew his knife, as I knew he would do, and when he raised his hand for the blow which he counted would put an end to me, my shoulder was beneath his arm in such fashion that he could not use his hand.

I had him gripped firmly, in a manner which rendered him powerless for evil ; but of more than that I could not boast.

It was impossible for me to use a weapon without first relaxing my hold of the Indian, and I knew too well that instantly I did so his knife would find its way between my ribs.

Therefore it was we remained locked in each other's embrace, neither able nor daring to strike a blow, and just beyond, from the midst of the thicket, came the sounds of Running Deer's struggle.

It was impossible for me to so much as guess whether the Delaware or his adversary had the best of the fight; but I knew only too well that unless he came off victor my fate was sealed.

The Ottawa whom I was embracing must have understood much the same as I, and there we stood, straining every muscle to hold the other firmly, as we waited for the death which must surely come to one of us.

The agony of suspense was great; it was only by calling into play all my will power could I keep my mind from the possibilities, for once I came to believe that Running Deer might be worsted, the full power of strength would leave me, being banished by fear.

The Delaware afterward told me that he could not have fought with his foe more than one full minute, and yet it seemed to me as if at least half

an hour passed before I heard a deep groan, which told that one or the other of the combatants had suddenly gone to the happy hunting-grounds.

I dared not speak Running Deer's name ever so softly, lest there should be other enemies within sound of my voice, and while I waited for the victor to appear all the mental pangs of death were mine.

Then I could have screamed for joy at the full strength of my lungs as the Delaware came from the thicket with a gory scalp at his belt, and little time was wasted after he caught one glance of the Ottawa and me.

Indeed he had come none too soon. I believe of a verity that I could not have held my grip sixty seconds longer, and immediately the savage foe had been dealt a deat-hblow, I literally sank to the ground as if the knife had found its way to my own heart.

It shamed me that I was forced to make such a show of weakness before Running Deer; but it could not have been avoided, and I said shamefacedly:

"Had I been alone I should have struggled to the end and never shown myself a woman; but the thought that my life depended upon your struggle, unnerved me."

"You remembered the trick which I taught you years ago," he replied, showing the generous side of his nature by looking anywhere rather than at my pale face. "Had you not lived so long with the English, you would have had a knife in your hand when you leaped upon him. To make the hug of the Delawares a success, it is necessary to jump back as quickly as you do forward, otherwise it is like to be a failure."

By the time he had spoken these words I recovered my ordinary composure; the blood came back to my face, and I was no longer ashamed of being seen.

"There are many Ottawas about," I said as a means of changing the subject, and Running Deer replied decidedly:

"Too many for us. Master McQuire should order us back to camp, or send for a larger force. We are well-nigh surrounded."

At that instant a light rustling of the foliage caused me to wheel around very suddenly in the belief that another of our foes was creeping up, and the Delaware clutched the haft of his knife as he bent forward ready to make a leap upon the intruder.

Then it was that the spruce branches were pulled gently aside, and to our great surprise we

saw, peering through the curtain of green, the face of none other than Master Gist.

I was near to crying out in astonishment, and might have done so but that he pressed his finger on his lips, when I knew he had full knowledge of the enemies everywhere around.

Silently as a shadow he stole forward until we three stood so near each other that our bodies came in contact, and then he asked in a gentle whisper :

"How far from here is Major Washington like to be found ?"

"Not less than seven miles, where he has built a fort," I replied. "Master McQuire, however, stands in yonder thicket, waiting until we have spied out the ground."

"There is no good reason for you to do any more scouting ; the forest is alive with French and Indians, all making ready for an attack upon the English. Lead the way to McQuire."

I obeyed him right willingly, for there was no desire in my heart to scout longer in that locality where a fellow was certain to run upon one or more savages at every turn.

As a matter of fact, we should have turned back when we first came upon the many trails, each showing that it had been made within the hour,

for it is taking needless risks to linger in search of further information when all that may be necessary has been obtained.

Five minutes later we three were at the rendezvous, and the planter and trader were greeting each other warmly.

Running Deer and I had no need to make a report, for Master Gist had more knowledge regarding the enemy than we had gained, and this he imparted to Master McQuire without delay.

Then it was I pointed to the fresh scalps in Running Deer's belt, and our leader knew we had not returned without meeting the foe.

Master Gist's story concerned more than our enemies. He had met a messenger from Half-King, who had been sent with information to Colonel Washington regarding the movements of the foe, and it was so important that Master McQuire believed we were warranted in returning to the fort without delay.

The Delaware sachem sent word that the hiding-place of a party numbering fifty French and Indians had that day been discovered by him, and if our commander would come at once to a certain place which was well-known to Running Deer, the whole force might readily be killed or captured.

"Bring no more men than can do the work, and

set out at sunset," Half-King had said through his messenger, and Running Deer whispered in my ear when we heard the words :

"It is well that Master McQuire goes to the fort at once, else we might not have a chance to join the party."

"It would seem as if you were certain to be taken, since Half-King has named you as the only one who knows where he may be found," I replied with somewhat of sharpness in my tones, for it cut me to realize that the young Delaware would be needed, while my presence with the party would be of no consequence.

"I would not leave the fort except by your side," Running Deer whispered, and instantly I was ashamed of the thoughts which had come into my heart.

Well, we wasted but little time after the arrival of the messenger from Half-King, who crept into the thicket like a serpent while Master Gist was telling us of the news he brought, but the return march was made slowly because it was necessary to move cautiously, which is much the same as saying we advanced at a snail's pace, on account of the many enemies which were known to be lurking near at hand.

Not until we were two miles from the halting-

place did any of our party mount, and then I took behind me Master Gist, while Running Deer did the same favor for Half-King's messenger.

I was not present when Colonel Washington was told of what we had found.

Masters Gist and McQuire sought him out immediately we arrived at Fort Necessity, and, a short time later, the messenger was summoned.

The remainder of our independent company was not considered of sufficient consequence to take part in the consultation which probably followed.

We had been in the fort two hours or more before Master McQuire came to his own quarters, and then he brought with him Master Gist, who said as he entered our hut of brushwood :

"I'm entitled to shelter here, inasmuch as I've enlisted as your comrade."

"What?" I cried in surprise and delight. "Is it really true that you are a member of the independent company?"

"Indeed it is, John Davidson, and where else should I be after joining Colonel Washington's force? By the way, I apologized for speaking of him as 'major' when I met you in the thicket; I did not then know that Governor Dinwiddie had shown the good sense to promote him. I have hungered and feasted in your company; been

with you as near death as a man may go and live, and know full well that all here are to be trusted to the utmost, therefore with you shall I fight the French, or else turn my face homeward once more."

Then Master Gist held out his hands toward us as if making a compact; but Running Deer was the only member of our company who did not make haste to greet the frontiersman as comrade.

"How is this?" Master Gist asked in surprise as he turned toward the Delaware, looking him full in the face. "Does it not please you that I count on standing shoulder to shoulder with those whom I have already proven."

"It is as I would have it," Running Deer replied, speaking slowly as if uncertain in his choice of words. "White men are not always ready to give their hands to the Indians, and I would not be too quick in offering mine."

"If by that you mean to say there's a question as to how I look upon you, lad, you're on the wrong trail. It's the heart that counts, and I have seen, or heard, of yours. When you left Half-King to turn back into the wilderness in search of those we had left behind, I knew you for a brave man and true."

Having said this Master Gist held out his hand

once more, and Running Deer grasped it warmly ; but said quickly, fearing lest the planter might be in error regarding the past :

"I went into the wilderness with John Davidson because the Dutchman was there."

"And from all I have heard it appears you found him," Master Gist said with a laugh, after which he turned once more to Masters McQuire and Currin, when the three began to discuss the details of the expedition we were to take part in that night.

From their conversation I came to understand that the party Colonel Washington was to lead against the French whose whereabouts Half-King had discovered, would number no more than forty, and our independent company could count on being well in the front from start to finish.

Two hours after sunset was the time decided upon for the command to leave the fort, and those who had been selected to take part in the enterprise were cautioned against holding any converse with the remainder of the force, for it was not the purpose of our commander to let the men who were to hold the fort know there was any possibility that a battle might be fought that night.

It was to be given out that the forty had been detailed on a scout, and, since it was now known

the enemy was so near at hand, no surprise would be caused because so many went forth.

"We shall march in the rain," Running Deer said to me when Master Gist spoke of the time appointed for us to leave the fort, and I looked up at the sky, wondering what signs the Delaware had seen which made him so positive as to what the weather might be within a few hours.

At that time it appeared to me as if there was every promise of a pleasant evening; but I knew Running Deer to be no mean weather prophet, therefore was prepared to see the storm clouds gather, as they did within the hour.

"It will be disagreeable to march through the wet bushes," I said with a laugh; "but since being acquainted with Colonel Washington we have been wet and cold so much of the time that a few hours won't count as anything."

Running Deer nodded gravely, as if to say he was alike indifferent to storm or calm so long as an enemy was to be met, and into his eyes came that same expression I had seen when he made ready to wreak his revenge on Master Van Braam.

An hour after sunset the rain began to fall, and the members of our little company set about providing themselves with flaps of deer-hide with which to cover the locks of their muskets.

Master Gist ate supper with us, as was proper since he had become our comrade, and when the meal was finished we sat in silence inside the hut, watching for the signal that the expedition was ready to set off on what might be, for very many of us, the last march in this world.

The rain came down steadily, and Running Deer declared it would not abate until after sunrise ; the night was so dark that objects ten paces distant could not be seen, and, take it altogether, it was as dismal a time of setting out to fight a battle as can well be imagined.

Master McQuire must have thought that some of us needed cheering, for he said to Master Currin, as if the idea had but just occurred to him :

"It is well for us that this storm has come up, because we may be certain the Ottawas will not prowl around as they were doing this morning. With so many in the forest as John Davidson and Running Deer found, I question if a party of forty could advance very many miles before being discovered."

"In case Half-King counts on taking the French by surprise, this is the very night on which to play the trick. How far to the rendezvous, Running Deer?" Master Currin asked carelessly.

"Six hours at a good pace," the Delaware replied, and Master Gist muttered half to himself:

"Which is the same as eight or nine on a night like this."

"We shall neither freeze nor starve, as it seemed positive would be the case when we left Venango," Master McQuire said with a laugh, and then all conversation came to an end, for a messenger had come with the word that we meet the commander near by the eastern entrance of the fort.

The time of departure was near at hand, and once more the cold chill of fear ran up and down my spine, for that which we had before us was no child's play.

It is not well that I set down too many words concerning the work of this night, May 25–26, for there is much of yet more importance to be told, before I can lay down the pen, knowing I have given a full account of my service with the officer who is now fighting against the king he then served.

Within ten minutes after receiving the summons, forty of us were marching in single file from the fort into the wilderness.

Running Deer led the way, much to his delight, and behind him came our colonel, while I was

third in the line, with Master McQuire close at my heels.

Master Gist and the remainder of our independent company brought up the rear, which was a position of great importance when one was likely to meet the Ottawas.

No man carried more than was absolutely necessary, that is to say, only his weapons and ammunition. We would get food from Half-King's force, or go hungry until our return to the fort, for it was not the part of wisdom to burden ourselves with the lightest weight or bulk, since it might become essential to move at the swiftest pace over a long distance.

As I have said, the night was so dark that one could not see objects close at hand ; but we had a good leader in Running Deer, whose eyes were something after the nature of a cat's, or so it had seemed to me many a time when he clearly distinguished this thing or that which remained hidden from me.

The rain fell steadily and smartly ; within ten minutes from beginning the march every man's garments were saturated. It was only by carrying our muskets with the locks well up under our arms and covered with the flaps of deer-hide, that we could hope to keep them sufficiently dry for use.

Running Deer spent ten minutes or more, after we were come to a small brook, in hunting for a path or trail which ran in the direction it was necessary we should travel, and after finding it we often strayed to one side or the other unless kept in line by holding to each other's garments.

Now and then one would stumble over a fallen branch or small tree-trunk, and, lurching against the man in advance, cause the entire line to sway wildly forward.

Often Running Deer brought us to a standstill, as he heard some suspicious sound in advance, and then we were crowded one against the other as is a flock of sheep when their leader stops too quickly.

There were also times when the young Delaware, well versed in woodcraft though he was, found himself at fault, for the trail was faint, and then the line stood silent and motionless until, by groping around on his hands and knees, Running Deer found it again.

To walk swiftly in that inky blackness was impossible, if one was disposed to guard against a fall, and many times did I say to myself that we could not hope to reach the rendezvous appointed by Half-King, until the sun was high in the heavens.

I failed of giving heed to the fact that Running Deer had been given the post of honor, and he, never before having been so honored by white men, was straining every effort to lead us through in sufficient time to admit of an attack before the night should come to a close.

The Delaware would have been heart-broken had he failed in doing that which was required of him ; but as it proved he had no cause for sorrow.

It was, perhaps, three hours after midnight when I heard the young Indian say to Colonel Washington :

"Half-King is near at hand. Shall I signal to him that we are here ?"

"If we are indeed at the end of our journey you have my heartiest thanks," the colonel replied in a whisper. "I question if any other in all this company could have guided us so well. Give the signal."

Then we heard the hoot of an owl, which was a moment later answered from some point close at hand, and in a twinkling Running Deer said proudly :

"Here is the sachem, Half-King, my colonel," and then the lad stepped quickly back by my side.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ATTACK.

MANY of our men stretched themselves out on the ground, when it was understood that we had arrived at the rendezvous, as if with the idea that they would be allowed a long time for repose : but I had it in mind that Half-King did not count on detaining us many moments.

I believed, however, that the sachem would give to our colonel an account of his finding the enemy, and stood ready for the summons to act as interpreter.

Having been in the company of white men so long, Running Deer could speak English exceeding well, and might better have acted the part of interpreter ; but he had never appeared willing to do so, and I continued to serve the colonel as I had done since that day in Williamsburg where I first saw him.

My services were indeed in demand, but not for many seconds.

Half-King welcomed our commander as a true

friend of the Delawares, and declared that his people would remain at peace with the English of Virginia so long as they heeded his advice.

Having said this much he fell silent, as if we had been summoned for no other purpose than to hear his words of friendship.

Colonel Washington knew full well how to deal with an Indian. Not until he had made formal reply to Half-King's protestations did he touch upon the reasons for our coming, and then it was to say :

"The messenger from my brother, Half-King, declared that those enemies of the English and the Delawares who are trying to steal our lands, were in hiding near by."

"Fifty Frenchmen are close at hand where they may be surprised if no time is lost."

"Will Half-King himself show the way, or will he send some one who can lead us?"

"The sachem of the Delawares is here with ten of his tribe, and will march side by side with the Englishman who showed himself a brave when we guided him to the settlements of the French."

Then our colonel announced that he and his men were ready, and without delay Half-King completed his preparations for surprising the enemy.

In answer to a low, soft call, not unlike the notes of some night bird, ten Indians sprang up as if they had been lying concealed beneath our very feet, and when the sachem had spoken a few words, the party disappeared from view, Half-King motioning for Colonel Washington to follow their guidance.

Running Deer was no longer responsible for the safety of the company, and he fell in behind me as the word was passed for our men to advance.

This last portion of the march was much like the first, except that every care was taken to move softly lest we betray our movements to the enemy.

In order that there might be no stumbling, or deviating from the trail, each man clutched with his left hand the garments of the comrade in front, and the pace was made purposely slow to admit of feeling the way with our feet to avoid the possibility of stepping upon that which might send forth an alarm.

How far we marched I cannot say ; but before the word to halt was whispered along the line I came to the conclusion that Half-King had no very accurate idea of distance, for he had announced that the French were "close at hand," and surely we could not have traveled less than four miles under his guidance.

It was daylight, although the sun had not yet shown himself, when we were halted on an elevation of land covered with huge boulders and rocks over which one could make his way only with difficulty.

Before us was a small area of meadow, whereon had been thrown up four rude huts, and it was in these that Half-King told Colonel Washington the enemy would be found.

It did not seem to me possible there could be any Frenchmen in the makeshifts for dwellings, else would sentinels have been posted at the different points to guard against such a surprise as we proposed giving them.

They must have known beyond a peradventure, if, perchance, Half-King was correct in his statement, that they were in an enemy's country, and the idea of building huts in which to lay down to sleep as if there was nothing in all the broad land to cause alarm, was, to my mind, the act of madmen.

"We have traveled for naught this night," I whispered to Running Deer. "The Frenchmen must have fled, for not a sentinel can be seen, and surely they would be keeping some sort of guard if a company was sheltered by those huts."

"Half-King had said they are there, and he

does not speak without knowing, as does a fool," Running Deer said quickly, and I understood that it would not be well for me to question this or any other statement the sachem might make.

However, I could believe what I pleased, so that I kept my tongue between my teeth, and again I said to myself that we had come on a wild-goose chase, to return from which might cost us dearly.

At this instant Colonel Washington and Half-King were standing within a couple of paces from where Running Deer and I had halted, while the remainder of the company, save the Delaware scouts who were approaching the huts, was a short distance in the rear.

The colonel had turned to give some order, as I fancied, just as one of the scouts went incautiously near the rude dwellings, when the enemy began to show himself.

From each hut the Frenchmen swarmed out like bees when their nest is disturbed, and almost at the same instant that I caught a glimpse of the foremost, a volley of bullets came among us.

Of a verity the enemy were no sluggards at opening a fight, and we who had come to take them by surprise, were near to having the tables turned upon us.

I saw one of our men pitch forward on his face

with a ball in his heart, and another topple over awkwardly as the bone of his leg was shattered, after which there was no longer time to give heed to anything save that which I had come to do.

Colonel Washington appeared to stand in the very midst of flying missiles coming from front and rear, yet he was as cool and sensible of what should be done as if he knew beyond a peradventure that he could not by any possibility be wounded.

There was little need for our commander to give orders, however. Every member of the company was an old hand at such kind of fighting, and in a twinkling all sought shelter, after which a heavy fire was poured in upon the enemy.

The Frenchmen showed that they had courage, but very little discretion. Instead of falling back across the meadow to the slope where every man could have a boulder as breast-works, they drew up in line a few paces distant from the huts, and there fired as rapidly as their weapons could be reloaded.

All of our party had gained a shelter except Colonel Washington and Half-King, Running Deer and myself. The first two stood exposed to full view where the enemy had first seen them, and there was in my mind the thought that they

were thus reckless because neither would make the first move toward seeking cover.

Because the old Delaware chose to stand in the open, Running Deer refused to take advantage of tree or boulder, and of a verity I was not minded to be the only one of the four to beat a retreat.

Thus it was we remained fair target for all that company of Frenchmen, and had the battle been prolonged it would have been impossible that we could escape death or severe wounds.

As it was, however, and mighty fortunate for us according to my way of thinking, the engagement was very short, lasting no longer than would admit of the most active discharging his musket five times.

Then the enemy could do no better than show a white cloth in token of submission.

Not all were willing to surrender, however. When one of the company waved the apology for a flag, a dozen or more turned and ran at full speed for the opposite slope where good shelter could be found, and if that move had been made at the outset our victory had neither been so speedy or complete.

Colonel Washington ordered Master Gist to go in pursuit with a dozen men ; but even while the

command was being given, twice that number of our company darted down the hill.

It must be remembered that our people were not soldiers, accustomed to move only at the word of command; but frontiersmen, who had their own peculiar views as to how a battle should be fought, and carried them out regardless of those in command.

Running Deer and I followed the two leaders down the slope as they approached the huts to receive the submission of those who had had their fill of fighting, and once we gained the French battle line it was plain to be seen why the engagement came to an end so suddenly.

Captain Jumonville, the commander of the French, was stretched out on the ground dead, with a bullet through his head, and we afterward learned that he fell at the first volley our people fired. Near him were ten other dead men, and one greivously wounded. Nine uninjured Frenchmen had thrown down their muskets in token of surrender, and the remainder of the party had taken to their heels; but did not remain at liberty many moments.

One after another the fugitives were taken prisoners, either by voluntary submission, or through being routed out of their hiding-places,

and when the last was brought in we had twenty-one captives.

A single member of the company had escaped, so it was said, and when he carried information of the disaster to the French commandant, it was safe to say that we at Fort Necessity would find ourselves in uncomfortably snug quarters.

During the first ten minutes after the engagement had come to an end, it looked very much as if Half-King's following would massacre the prisoners despite all our people could do, and if Colonel Washington had not taken a very decided stand, regardless of the possibility that he might disgruntle the whole Delaware nation, the Frenchmen would have been despatched at once.

The commander gave an order for our company to form in line directly in front of the prisoners to defend them, and then I was called upon to act the part of interpreter between him and Half-King, the conversation being carried on in such a lively fashion that it was all I could do to repeat the words as they were uttered.

At first Colonel Washington urged the Delaware sachem in the name of humanity to prevent his followers from murdering defenseless men in cold blood; but that argument, or appeal, whichever you choose to call it, had very little weight

with Half-King. He declared that the prisoners belonged to him, since but for the information sent, the enemy would not have been taken, and insisted that his braves, would never again fight in behalf of the English of Virginia if they were deprived of what they considered their rights.

Then our commander explained that white men did not murder captives; but treated them as prisoners of war, and declared that the English king would punish most severely any of his soldiers who should permit such a wrong.

To this Half-King replied that he and his braves were not slaves belonging to the king of England; but free men who fought battles according to their own ideas. That they could be enemies or friends as pleased them best, and if deprived of that which was rightfully theirs—meaning the prisoners — the Delawares might not hesitate to dig up the hatchet against the English of Virginia.

For a time it looked very much as if we should not only succeed in making of this powerful sachem a foe; but that he would, by sending to the village for a larger force, take the captives from us despite all our efforts to the contrary.

Many another man would either have delivered up the unhappy prisoners to the hatchet or the

torture, or come to an open rupture with Half-King.

Colonel Washington did neither. First he charged Masters Gist, McQuire and Currin with the safe-keeping of the Frenchmen, putting them in command of our force, and then he retired a short distance away to hold council with the Delawares.

Running Deer was quite confident that matters would be arranged as his people had demanded, and I shared this belief ; but we had little time in which to discuss the matter, since both of us were called upon to interpret between the colonel and the sachem.

I have always believed Half-King suspected I would not translate faithfully all that was said, and called upon Running Deer to make certain my tongue was straight.

However that may be, the young Delaware and myself were forced to perform the parts assigned us, and during two hours or more we struggled earnestly to make each of the speakers understand fully what the other had said.

Then Half-King agreed to yield his claims on these particular prisoners for the time being, and to lay the matter before his people. If it should be decided in solemn council that Colonel Wash-

ington had done them an injustice, the Delawares would take speedy steps toward avenging their wrongs.

To my mind this was much like a declaration of war. I was convinced the Delawares would hold to it strongly that the prisoners belonged to them because Half-King had arranged the surprise, and knew beyond question that those hotheads among the young braves who had been tempted by the rich bribes held out by the French, would use every effort to stir up the tribe against the colonists.

It was a most serious responsibility which our colonel had had thus suddenly thrust upon him, and if Half-King's nation declared against the English of Virginia in favor of the French, then would he be looked upon as the prime cause of all the bloodshed that must necessarily follow.

Our colonel, however, was not only a brave man; but one who would not let himself be frightened or forced from a path which he believed to be right, as was clearly shown in this case.

The Delawares set out for their own village, parting from us in something very like anger, and the colonel went slowly back to the huts where our wounded, and those of the French,

were being cared for as well as could be done in the absence of regular surgeons.

We had lost one in killed, and three wounded, surely not very severe punishment when one takes into consideration that for a time the engagement was as hot as it well could be.

Captain Jumonville was buried where he had fallen, and with but little ceremony, for we had no time to spare for anything save that which was absolutely necessary.

We had yet before us the return to Fort Necessity, and it must be made through the forest where Running Deer and I had seemingly found the Ottawas thick as berries in August, therefore every moment was precious.

Litters had been made for the two wounded men who would not be able to walk, and within half an hour after Half-King brought the council, or discussion, as it might be called, to an end, we had set our faces toward the fort, realizing full well the dangers by which we would be presently surrounded.

The rain ceased falling at daybreak; but the low-hanging clouds told that the storm was not come to an end and we had good reason to believe the elements would be against us before we gained such shelter as was to be found in the fortification.

Running Deer marched just behind me, moody and silent. There was on his face an expression of uneasiness, and I could well understand that he was speculating upon his position in case the Delawares should declare war against the colonists, or even go so far as to ally themselves with the French.

There was in my mind the belief that the colony of Virginia would be entirely destroyed if Half-King's people took up arms against the English, for it did not need any very wise man to understand that the settlers could not successfully battle at the same time against the French and the most powerful nations of savages.

"What do you think will be the result?" I asked of Running Deer after we had marched in silence half an hour or more.

"Half-King believes the Delawares have been wronged."

"And you?"

"I think as does he. Because of what the Delawares did, the colonel has gained a big victory, and if he had not beaten the French, they would have come against the fort. The white men take the prisoners, and the Indians, who planned it all, go away with empty hands."

This speech disturbed me more than I cared to

admit even to myself ; if Running Deer believed an injustice had been done, then every brave in the nation would probably be of the same opinion, in which case the English of Virginia must speedily be wiped off the earth.

"Surely you do not believe it is right to kill a defenseless prisoner," I said, hardly knowing why I attempted to convert him to a white man's view of the situation.

"If you do not kill the French, they will kill you."

"In a fair fight, yes ; but the white men do not murder those who cannot raise a hand in their own defense."

"It is wiser to do so, and then one's enemies are more quickly crushed," Running Deer replied moodily.

"If Colonel Washington had believed as you do, Running Deer would have gone to the happy hunting-grounds many days ago. Our colonel has but defended the French prisoners as he defended the Delaware prisoner, when the Dutchman would have murdered him."

Running Deer looked up quickly at me, and I saw that on his face which told of a decided change in views.

The situation was thus brought home to him

very forcibly, and perhaps for the first time he understood thoroughly the justice of Colonel Washington's course.

That he could be brought around so quickly to look at the matter in a different light, gave me an idea such as I thought worth consideration, for, as it seemed to me, unless something was done quickly, the Delawares would be on the war-path.

Therefore it was I mustered sufficient courage to hasten ahead and accost the commander, who was holding a whispered converse with Master Gist.

Had the situation been one whit less grave and threatening, I never could have plucked up courage to address him with what might seem like advice from a soldier whose duty it was to hold his tongue ; but the idea in my mind seemed so promising that I chanced everything, and asked if I might be allowed to speak with him.

"Have you something to say in private, John Davidson?" he asked, looking surprised, as well he might, for never before had I presumed to begin a conversation with him.

"No, sir ; it is well Master Gist should hear what I have to say ; but first I pray your pardon for daring to speak on what does not really concern me."

"I am not afraid you will meddle to any serious extent," he said with a smile which went far toward giving me courage to continue.

"Running Deer believes his people will dig up the hatchet against the English of Virginia because we have taken away the French prisoners," I began hesitatingly, for it was difficult to decide just how it might be best to present the matter.

"And I fear Running Deer is correct. I could not have allowed the murders to be committed, whatever the result."

"Very true, sir; but it has come to me that perhaps Half-King may look at the matter in a different light, if he be speedily reminded that Running Deer's life was saved because you would not allow prisoners to be killed. That affair might bring the matter home to him from a different point of view, for it is the same as this one, provided it be presented before it is too late."

Master Gist suddenly clapped me on the shoulder with such force that I reeled in my tracks, as he cried:

"You've hit the nail on the head, John Davidson! That is the game to play with the sachem!"

"Think you it might be of any avail to remind Half-King of the fact?" Colonel Washington

asked of Master Gist, and the latter replied emphatically :

"Ay, that I do, colonel. The old fellow should remember that you did no more for the Frenchman than you had already done for a Delaware, and once he does so I'm believing he'll take a different stand."

Colonel Washington remained silent as if in deep thought while one might have counted twenty, and then said abruptly, addressing himself to Master Gist :

"There is a faint hope something might come of such a plan, and we ought not neglect a single opportunity, however slight, for as matters stand now the colonists of Virginia are like to be in sore distress. Take the two lads with you, and overtake Half-King ; spend with him as much time as seems necessary, and if no more good comes of the effort, you will be able to bring latest intelligence of what the Delawares propose to do."

Master Gist did not attempt to parley ; on the instant he stepped aside out of the line, motioning me to do the same, and our colonel waved his hand kindly in token of adieu and good wishes, or, at least, I so interpreted the gesture.

We stood by the side of the trail until Running Deer was come opposite us, when Master Gist

brought him to our side with a glance, so quick was the Delaware to understand either sign or look, after which we waited for the company to pass us.

Then when we were alone in the forest, the troop having passed out of sight and hearing, Master Gist said to Running Deer :

"You should be able to guide us to Half-King."

The Delaware gazed at the planter questioningly, and, finally, the latter explained somewhat of our purpose, when Running Deer said heartily :

"It is well to speak with the sachem before a council can be held ; his heart is soft toward the English of Virginia, and he would not wrong the white men. John Davidson's words brought me to look differently upon what has been done, and they may have power with Half-King."

"Is he like to go far from where we left him ?"

"Not this day. An hour spent on the trail will take us to him ; but he may ask that we go with him to the village of the Delawares."

"And in that case, lad, we shall do exactly as he wishes."

"What !" I cried in amaze. "Would you go as far as Logstown when it is possible the enemy may attack the fort at any day ?"

"Ay, that I would, John Davidson, if it so be

we can do anything whatsoever toward persuading the Delawares to keep peace with the English of Virginia. Better we lose that fortification a dozen times over, than that such a sachem as Half-King decides to take up the hatchet against us."

"But if the Delawares should conclude to go on the war-path, we would fall the first victims, or, what is an hundred times worse, as I know to my sorrow, be held as slaves,"

"Half-King would not allow that such a thing be done!" Running Deer cried emphatically. "His heart is as big as a white man's, and he does not strike those who have trust in him."

"That's exactly my idea, lad; but even though we stood good chance of being singled out as the first victims, our work is of so much importance to the English of Virginia, that I would take any and every risk."

It was all very well for Master Gist, who did not know the suffering of a slave among the Indians, to declare himself thus. I had lived through long, painful years as a captive in the Delaware village, and sudden death had few terrors for me as compared with another month of such experience.

I knew beyond the possibility of a doubt that

those Indians who desired peace with the English of Virginia more than they feared the enmity of the French, were small in numbers as against those who would give ear to the promises made by General de St. Pierre. Even Jeskakake and White Thunder were more than half convinced it would be of advantage to the Delawares to take sides with the French, and however strong Half-King might be in council, he could not hold his own against so many.

In brief, I was almost convinced that a return to Logstown meant death or captivity for us, and since our commander himself had not absolutely ordered me to go, I doubted much whether I would follow Master Gist so far.

However, I put the matter from my mind after a time, for it was not yet certain that Half-King would even propose that we go to his village, and there is little sense in borrowing trouble from the future when one can find so much in the present.

Running Deer, well pleased with the idea of having speech with the sachem again, led the way at a rapid pace, and we two followed with but little heed to the surroundings, for there was no fear of meeting with the Ottawas on that trail.

As the young Delaware had said, we overtook

Half-King in less than an hour. He and his following had halted, evidently for the purpose of talking over the situation as presented by Colonel Washington's stand against the murder of prisoners, and no one gave any heed to us after one quick, searching glance when we first came up.

Master Gist, eager to begin his work of peace-making, insisted that I repeat to Half-King without delay that which I had said to Running Deer; but I knew enough of Indian customs to understand that the sachem would refuse to listen to me at such a time.

"They are holding a little council by themselves, probably to decide what shall be said on their arrival at Logstown, and the white man who should be so foolish as to speak now would be roughly treated."

This much I said to Master Gist, knowing full well my words were straight; but he, who should have understood better from having had so much intercourse with the savages, believed I held back because of being afraid, and appealed to Running Deer.

"We must wait until the sachem is ready to hear us," he said gravely, and without further words seated himself on a fallen tree an hundred paces or more distant from the Delawares; but

taking good care to remain where they might keep him in view.

I followed him, and, finally, Master Gist came to understand that it would be better to take our advice. The need was not so urgent that we must imperil our chances for success by pressing the cause at an unseasonable moment, for the main body of Delawares would remain in ignorance of the stand taken by Colonel Washington until Half-King and his following arrived at Logstown.

It was a long, tedious wait we had; the Indians talked slowly, held silence during long intervals, and smoked much. We conversed at times on this subject or that; but never once mentioning that which lay nearest our hearts.

The sun was low in the heavens before the council was brought to a close by the rising of Half-King, who came slowly toward us with bent head, as if his thoughts were disagreeable.

"Which of you lads will speak with him?" Master Gist asked in a whisper, and since Running Deer remained silent I said:

"It is better the words be spoken by him whose life was saved when the Dutchman would have killed a prisoner."

The young Delaware made no protest; rising

immediately he went toward the sachem, bringing him to a halt beyond earshot of us.

Then Running Deer spoke with animation and at considerable length ; but Master Gist was disturbed in mind because we could not hear one of his words.

"Think you, John Davidson, the young Delaware would play us false ?" he asked in a whisper.

"In what way ?" I asked in surprise.

"By persuading the sachem to join the French, instead of saying that which we had agreed upon."

I was angry because Master Gist could even think Running Deer capable of such treachery, and said hotly :

"Running Deer's heart is white, as you should know by this time, Master Gist. There is no double meaning to his words, and to him would I trust my life though every other in this world was against me."

"Well, well, lad, there's no reason to get excited ; it is but natural any one in my position should be suspicious, especially when he deals with Indians. The young Delaware has up to this time acted like a man——"

"It will be well for you to look upon him as honest, if it be your purpose to go to Logstown, because once there Running Deer will be the only

friend. Even Half-King cannot be depended upon now that he believes himself wronged by our colonel."

There was no opportunity for us to hold further converse, because Running Deer was returning.

I looked into his face searchingly to learn if he had been successful; but the features told nothing.

"Well?" Master Gist asked impatiently when the young Delaware stood silent before us.

"Half-King bids you come to Logstown, where you can say to our people why the English wish to keep their prisoners alive."

"Did he give heed to what you said?"

"His ears were open wide; but his tongue remained close between his teeth."

"Think you he favors the English of Virginia?" I asked, disheartened and alarmed by the proposition that we go to the village of the Delawares.

"He has always been their friend, and his face would not be turned from them now but for wrong-doing," Running Deer replied, and my heart beat fast and loud, for it appeared as if the meeting with Half-King had once more filled him with bitterness against my people.

"Well," Master Gist said as if thinking aloud, "if the sachem holds to it that we had best go to

Logstown, there is nothing else to be done. I wonder when he counts on starting?"

"At sunrise to-morrow," Running Deer replied.

"We will follow on his trail."

"And what about our people at Fort Necessity?" I asked sharply. "Is it the act of brave men to leave their comrades when the enemy is so near at hand?"

"I reckon it requires more courage to follow Half-King," Master Gist replied grimly. "Certain it is we can do more good to the colonists by holding fast to our mission until there is no longer any hope of success."

I was sorely perplexed, and yet, when the decisive moment came, knew full well I would not turn my back on the work.

One of Half-King's party brought in two quarters of venison at this moment, and instead of cudgeling my brain further, I did what I might toward preparing that portion given to us for supper, and surely we stood in need of food, having partaken of nothing since the evening previous.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PRISONER.

UNLESS I cut this apology for a story short somewhere, I shall not have time to finish it before the Continental army departs from these, the most dismal winter quarters that soldiers ever went into. General, the Baron Steuben, warned me this afternoon, when I carried to his hut the last ten pages for him to read and criticise, that we were not like to remain here many days longer, therefore must I hasten my task.

Because of such warning I shall pass over the four days we three, meaning Master Gist, Running Deer and myself, spent with Half-King's force of braves making the journey to Logstown, by simply saying that we arrived at the village of the Delawares after a most exasperatingly slow march. It was much as though the sachem wished to spend as many hours on the road as possible without absolutely standing still, and when we were finally arrived, it was to find nearly all the younger braves absent—with the Frenchmen, as I believed.

Half-King had twice told Running Deer that it would not be wise for us to chafe at delays; but prepare ourselves to remain quietly in the village until the important question as to which nation of white people the Delawares would ally themselves with, had been settled, and this, he intimated, might be a matter of several weeks.

There was in my mind a suspicion that the sachem would be pleased to keep us with him at a time when our services were most needed at the fort; but Master Gist declared again and again that we would never again be in position to do as much good to the English of Virginia as then. That even though the chances were against accomplishing the purpose of our visit, he would insist on remaining until the last shred of hope had been destroyed.

We were given the use of a tepee in the village; but none of the squaws offered to prepare our food, and it appeared to me much as if no one save Half-King himself was favorably inclined toward our remaining. It is true that no indignities were put upon us; but also a fact that never a person appeared desirous of making us welcome.

Save when we wandered through the village, we were as much alone as if we had encamped in the unbroken forest, and, acting upon the advice

given to Running Deer by Half-King, it was but seldom that we showed ourselves.

Six days passed uneventfully after our arrival, making ten risings of the sun since we parted company with Colonel Washington, and then a runner came in with news of what was being done by the English and French.

As a matter of course we were not invited to hear that which he had come to tell; but, later on that same night, Half-King came to our tepee with the information brought, and I set it down here in the fewest possible words in order the more quickly to bring this overly long story to an end.

First in point of importance was the news that the French had completed the fort captured from Captain Trent's force at the Forks of the Ohio, and named it "Duquesne" in honor of the Governor-General of Canada. It was now occupied by a thousand men—French and Indians—under command of Monsieur Contrecœur, and was the strongest station held by the enemy this side of Montreal.

The prisoners, whose lives were like to cost the English of Virglnia the friendship of the Delawares, had been sent from Fort Necessity over the mountains to Williamsburg, where they could

be guarded safely, and a great ado was being made by the French over their capture. General de St. Pierre claimed that we had absolutely murdered Captain Jumonville and those who fell with him, since, instead of being a war-party, the captain was heading a peaceful embassy on its way to treat with Governor Dinwiddie or his representatives. Therefore, so far as the general situation was concerned between white men, our people would have been in no worse plight had they allowed the Delawares to work their will on the captives.

Colonel Fry, who had been appointed chief in command of the forces at Fort Necessity, had died of some sudden illness at Will's Creek, and the men he had with him at the time pushed forward to the fortification, thus giving Colonel Washington a command of over four hundred.

Encouraged by this accession of numbers, and now being unquestionably the commander-in-chief, our colonel had abandoned Fort Necessity to advance upon Fort Duquesne, having, at the time the runner left the vicinity, arrived as far as Master Gist's plantation, where intrenchments were thrown up in order that the place might be used as a base of supplies.

It can well be fancied that this budget of start-

ling news excited us greatly, and I felt more than ever convinced it was our duty to leave Logstown without delay, for of a surety we would be sorely needed in case the colonel made an attack upon the large force of French at Fort Duquesne.

In this, however, my advice was unheeded by Master Gist and Running Deer. The greater portion of the tribe were yet absent, and it was claimed by my comrades that until they returned we had not begun the work set us to do.

Half-King was once more showing himself very friendly to the English; the trouble about the prisoners was getting to be an old story, and, as Master Gist said, if we stayed there two months, and finally succeeded in preventing the Delawares from an alliance with the French, we would have accomplished more than Colonel Washington could possibly do for the colonists; the capture of Fort Duquesne could not be of as much importance.

Therefore it was I held my peace, and settled down, very unwillingly, to a longer stay at the village which was hateful to me because of past suffering.

Day after day went by; we strolled about, now and then hunting a little, but warned against venturing very far from the encampment, and altogether we spent a most dismal time.

The main body of Delawares did not show themselves, and I insisted that already were they in the employ of the French, while we sat there waiting for what would never come our way.

I had become convinced that we were being held there by soft words simply in order to prevent us from doing our duty with Colonel Washington's force, although Master Gist laughed at the idea that we three could be considered of so much consequence.

Then, when it seemed to me I had been half a lifetime at Logstown, spending the hours in idleness when I might have been of service to the colonists, other runners came in, bringing information that Colonel Washington had decided to fall back upon Fort Necessity once more. The intrenchments at Master Gist's plantation had been abandoned, and the soldiers were strengthening the original fortification, being urged thereto by the advance of the enemy, who was gathering in overwhelming numbers at Fort Duquesne.

It was now the month of June. The Delawares had not declared for or against us, save in the case of Half-King before the battle with Jumonville's force, and we three might as well have been prisoners, except that we were not treated with indignity.

Even Master Gist was beginning to show signs of discouragement, and but for an arrival which at once plunged us into the greatest consternation, I believe we would have departed from Logstown with but scanty notice of our intentions.

I no longer attempted to count the days, for it had become mournful work to add each twenty-four hours to the many we had spent in idleness ; but certain am I it was near the middle of June, at the close of a very warm day, when we were lounging in front of our tepee discussing for the hundredth time the unpromising situation, that a party of Delawares—some of those who had so long been absent—came into the village with loud shouts of joy and triumph.

I half sprang up from the ground, believing that at last our long, dreary time of waiting was come to an end ; but sank back very quickly on realizing that among the Indians one writes himself down a fool who displays either surprise or desire.

" Now we can count on getting about our work," Master Gist said in a tone of satisfaction, believing the entire tribe was returning to the village, and almost in the same breath he gave vent to a low cry of fear and dismay.

Looking up quickly to learn the cause of this

sudden change in his tone, I saw that those who were entering the village had with them a prisoner, and in another second I was echoing Master Gist's cry, for in the helpless captive I saw none other than Master McQuire.

"How did he fall into their clutches?" I asked in a whisper, my voice trembling with emotion, and instead of answering my question, Running Deer muttered:

"The Delawares have gone over to the Frenchmen, and this is the first blow against the English of Virginia!"

"Even so, how does it chance that McQuire has fallen victim. Can it be that Colonel Washington has been whipped?"

There was in these last words terrible food for reflection, and like a flash of light came to my mind the knowledge that if an attack had really been made upon our people by the Delawares, then might Master Gist and myself count on speedily taking our places by the side of the helpless captive.

We sat there as if stricken motionless with horror, and Running Deer appeared quite as much concerned as either Master Gist or myself, while the war-party paraded their victim around the village that the squaws and small boys might

have opportunity of torturing him, passing, as they did so, within a dozen feet of our tepee.

Master McQuire looked full at us while being thus conducted, with the howling pack at his heels ; but never a quiver of his eyelids told that he had seen us before.

On our part, we gazed without giving signs of recognition, although it was hardly to be hoped that we might persuade the savages we had never before seen the unhappy prisoner, for there were many in the village who had met him with us when we first visited the place in company with Colonel Washington.

Until the swaggering captors had made a complete circuit of the village and halted in front of Half-King's tepee, did either of us speak, and then it was to ask the same question :

Had our people been beaten by the French and their allies, among whom we might now count the Delawares ?

"This much is certain," Master Gist said thoughtfully, after a long time of silence. "If there has been a fight in which these Indians took part, we will soon know it, for they'll have us alongside of McQuire before many minutes more have passed."

And I was confident that very shortly we would

be occupying the position of captives instead of guests.

Running Deer made no comment ; but from the expression on his face I believed it was in his mind that soon he must stand against all his tribe as our friend, or look on with so much of calmness as he might while we were being tortured to death.

To our great surprise, however, there was no evidence that those who had lately returned felt any particular enemity against us. Two or three of the young braves whom I had known while held in the village as captive, came up to speak to Running Deer and myself, and their words were most friendly.

There was one question burning on my tongue all the while we were greeting these newcomers ; but I dare not put it into spoken words, and even Running Deer was uncertain as to how it might be received, therefore not until we had held converse on almost every other topic save that of whether the Delawares would ally themselves with the French, he asked as if the matter was of no particular consequence to him :

"Where did you take the prisoner ?"

"In the forest," was the ready reply, both persons speaking, as a matter of course, in the Delaware tongue.

"Did you kill any?"

"He was alone."

"Is he English or French?"

"English; a trader from Will's Creek."

Now it was that Running Deer assumed a look of astonishment as he asked:

"Are the Delawares on the war-path?"

"You know full well that some of them have been," the Indian replied with a meaning look at Running Deer.

"If those I went out with had taken a captive they would not have brought him here, where Half-King, Jeskakake and White Thunder would have set him free."

"The sachems will not do that now," the young brave replied confidently. "There are many of us who count on taking up the hatchet against the English of Virginia, and Half-King stands alone in favor of peace."

"Has Jeskakake and White Thunder declared for the French?"

"No, and neither will they oppose us who would go on the war-path."

Now it was that I understood the situation right well, and realized that we had but wasted our time in remaining at Logstown.

The Delawares were divided against themselves,

and the younger braves of the nation would accept —probably already had accepted—General de St. Pierre's terms.

However, so great was my anxiety regarding Master McQuire, that I gave this last matter but little thought at the time. Unless it had been agreed upon that another party was coming in very shortly, the trader would be put to the torture within a few days, perhaps hours, and I was resolved to make one effort at liberating the poor fellow even though it should cost me my life.

When our visitor departed, and I had repeated to Master Gist the subject of his talk, the planter said as he rose to his feet :

"We must see Half-King at once. Running Deer, you shall act as interpreter. Surely the sachem can save the poor fellow's life."

The young Delaware shook his head despondently, as he said slowly :

"I will go with you to Half-King ; but it would be better to first ask if he is willing to see you. He can do nothing for the prisoner now that the young braves have decided on his torture."

"Go then at once to the sachem, and tell him that I, who have always been his very good friend, would speak with him now regarding McQuire."

Running Deer set off at once, and I made bold to say to Master Gist :

"It is in my mind that Half-King is powerless now there are so many who favor the French. If Master McQuire is to be saved, we must do it, with or without Running Deer, as he shall say."

The planter looked at me as if thinking I had taken leave of my senses, and well might he believe so, for to rescue a prisoner after he had been brought into the village was as wild a scheme as could have been proposed. It would be necessary to set ourselves against every brave, every squaw and even the children, while they all, most likely, would be on guard against us, suspecting that something of the kind might be attempted.

"It cannot be done," Master Gist said with a long-drawn sigh after many moments of silence.

"Then I will take the chances of dying with him," I added, grown courageous through sheer desperation. "I would not care to live and have it said against me that I stood idly by while a comrade was put to the torture."

The planter leaned forward and took my hand in his, looking me full in the eye while I might have counted ten, after which he said with emphasis :

"Then we shall leave our scalps here, John Davidson, for I'm not the coward to allow you to make such a sacrifice alone."

Then we fell silent, as men will when death stares them in the face, and not less than half an hour passed before Running Deer came back, his face so cold and impassive that I could read on it neither hope nor fear.

We waited for him to speak; but he was more the Indian than ordinarily, and remained silent as he sat by my side until I, losing patience, asked sharply:

"Is it well to keep friends in suspense when a comrade of theirs stands near the stake?"

"The trader has treated me as he would a white comrade, and because of that my heart is as heavy as yours," Running Deer said sadly, and I touched his hand that he might know I regretted having spoken harshly.

"Am I to see Half-King?" Master Gist asked, and the young Delaware shook his head, as he replied:

"The sachem can give you no aid; his young braves will fight with the French, and refuse longer to listen to his voice. If you go to his tepee, or he comes here, it may be thought that you would save the trader, who will be bound to the

stake on the night after to-morrow, and a closer watch might be kept."

"McQuire has always been friendly with the Delawares; is it not possible to buy his life? I will give anything in my possession."

"The young braves have determined that he shall be tortured because Colonel Washington saved the French prisoners."

"That looks much as if they counted on taking to the war-path against both nations," Master Gist said in perplexity.

"It will be done that the English of Virginia may understand the Delawares claim the life of every prisoner," Running Deer replied gravely, and Master Gist, unable longer to restrain his temper, broke out into a torrent of threats against all Indians, but particularly those of Logstown.

Running Deer waited until the planter's anger had subsided somewhat, and then he said quietly:

"It is Half-King's advice that we leave the village to-morrow morning. He will get promises from the young braves that we shall not be interfered with while going from here to the fort."

"And that is all the sachem, who claims to have so much influence in the Delaware nation, can do!" Master Gist cried in a rage. "We are

advised to go away before the work of torture begins!"

"We can do nothing for the trader by remaining here, and——"

"John Davidson and I will stand by him to the last!"

"Then will there be three at the stake instead of one. Can you crush all who are here? How long could you stand before fifty Delawares? By leaving the village we might have such help as Half-King could give us."

Both Master Gist and I were puzzled by Running Deer's words, which seemed so full of contradictions, and I asked petulantly:

"What do you mean? Why not speak with a single tongue? You say it is the sachem's advice that we should leave the village, and in the same breath declare that he can only help us if we go. I do not understand such double talk!"

"If you leave the village is it certain you must keep on to the fort? Do you not know how to turn back on the trail? When you are gone the young braves will no longer think you might interfere to save the prisoner. If I set out for the fort, who shall say that I gave aid to the trader against my own tribe? If we are not here, will any one think Half-King would raise his hand to

save the white man when his voice as sachem was powerless?"

It was only with difficulty that I restrained myself from crying aloud with joy! Now it was that I understood why Half-King had given such advice, and that the sachem had promised to aid us!

Surely the clouds which had been so dark a few moments before, were now bright, and I said to myself that Master McQuire's life was safe, unless, perchance, he was again made prisoner after having escaped.

"You're a brave lad, Running Deer, and if the time ever comes when I can do Half-King a good turn, he can count on me," Master Gist said feelingly, and the young Delaware's face lighted up as I had never seen it but once before, which was when he had been counted in with us as a member of our independent company.

"Did you see the prisoner?" I asked after a time, and the lad replied quietly:

"I found the chance to warn him that friends might be near at hand to-morrow night."

"Good for you, lad. Its a big thing you've done for McQuire, because its going straight against your own people, with the exception of the sachem. I'm not much given to promises; but

this I'll say and make it good when the time comes: If we succeed in getting McQuire out of this hole, the authorities of Virginia colony shall give you a commission in the next company that is raised for defense."

"I shall do what I may without thought of gifts. He is my comrade even as he is yours, and had Half-King given me no hope, I would have stood by you two when you fought for him to the death."

After this we did not spend much time in asking and answering questions. It was necessary we lay our plans with such exactness that Half-King might know where we were every moment of time after leaving the village until we had returned for the rescue, and in doing so Running Deer was the leader.

He it was who proposed that we publicly make known at once to the sachem that it was our purpose to return to the fort, asking that his people agree to leave us unmolested until we had joined our company. Then, if they chose to look upon us as enemies, it would be every man for himself.

We did as the young Delaware had said, walking slowly through the village to Half-King's tepee that all might see us, and on the way it

was necessary to pass within a dozen feet of where Master McQuire stood bound hand and foot to a tree.

The trader looked at us listlessly, as if we were nothing to him; but I fancied his eyelids quivered slightly when Master Gist looked earnestly at him.

It goes without saying that he knew full well we would risk our lives to save him, even though Running Deer had not given warning, and he must have understood why we treated him as a stranger in whose fate we were indifferent.

Half-King received us in his usual fashion; listened gravely when Master Gist made known what we would do, speaking through Running Deer, and finally replied that he would summon his young men to the council lodge that night.

This ended the interview, at which were half a dozen spectators, and we went back to our tepee, where Running Deer described minutely the course he would have us take.

We would travel no less than five miles in the direction of the fort, setting off early next morning, and then spend the remainder of the day making certain that spies had not been sent out on our trail. At sunset we were to begin the

return march, traveling slowly, and halting half a mile from the village until two hours after midnight, when the final effort was to be made.

Just how we should set about compassing his escape it would be impossible to decide until the decisive moment arrived, and then we must act according to circumstances.

Running Deer believed, however, that we might be able to creep up to the prisoner without making any detour, cut his bonds, and, when the circulation of blood had been restored to his cramped limbs, set off in flight.

It was a simple plan; but the slightest thing would upset it at the expense of our own lives. The breaking of a twig beneath our feet; the barking of a cur, or a watchful sentinel, would be sufficient to doom us to the stake by the side of Master McQuire, unless we were minded to fight until death laid us low.

And now to tell in very few words that which we did toward setting Master McQuire free.

The council was held as Half-King had promised, and the tribe agreed that we should be allowed to depart in peace, every Delaware present promising not to raise his hand against us until we had arrived at Fort Necessity. After that we were to look upon them as enemies unless

the pipe had been again smoked with the English of Virginia.

On that night we slept as much as possible, in order to be fresh for what lay before us ; but my mind often went out in sympathy to the unfortunate man who was bound to the tree of doom where every ill-natured squaw or vicious child might give him pain.

Half an hour after sunrise next morning we three stood in front of Half-King's tepee, and when the old sachem came out we bade him good-by in a respectful fashion.

All the occupants of the village must have seen us set off in the direction of Fort Necessity, and we traveled as if it was our intention to get there at the earliest possible moment, until arriving at the place where Running Deer believed it would be safe to make the halt.

Then, hiding among the foliage, we waited silent and motionless, two hours or more to make certain no one was following our trail.

Satisfied as to this point, we scouted through the forest first in one direction and then another, until it seemed positive we were absolutely alone.

If any had been sent to spy upon us, we must have known it before this time, and there was

little chance those now in the village would leave until after the torture of the victim.

We talked but little as we remained hidden in the thicket waiting until the day should come to a close. There was nothing more to be said so far as concerned the venture we were about to make, and it is always dangerous to wag one's tongue when there is a possibility that enemies may approach.

At sunset Running Deer gave the signal for return, by rising to his feet, and we followed him slowly and in silence two hours or more, when he came to a halt in a small grove of oak trees which I knew was situate less than half a mile from the village.

Now was come the most trying time of all for us. We had nothing to do save think of the possibilities before us, and this occupation was so gloomy that I grew cowardly to such an extent that it seemed as if I never could force myself to make the desperate venture.

However, when the moment came that Running Deer was ready to begin the task, I forgot my fears, and would have moved forward alone, but that the young Delaware held me back in order to whisper :

"One can do the work better than three ; there

will be less danger of giving an alarm if I go alone, while you two stand ready to come to my assistance if I am discovered. It was Half-King's advice that I go, therefore remain here five minutes."

Having thus spoken, he was off before we could make any protest, and Master Gist whispered in my ear:

"It is too late now to object; we cannot afford to squabble when it may cost McQuire his life. We will do as the lad says, and I'm thinking he'll finish the job better than could either you or I."

It was not to my liking, this leaving Running Deer to brave all the danger; but how could I prevent it? I was resolved, however, that if he fell into trouble I would go to his assistance even though we might have effected the escape of Master McQuire.

Unless I had known thoroughly well the country in that vicinity, it would have been impossible to follow the young Delaware, so silently did he vanish into the darkness; but every tree and bush was familiar to me, from having spent so many years of captivity around about, and I led Master Gist straight to that portion of the village from which we could have a view of the spot where we last saw Master McQuire.

Not the lightest sound broke the stillness; it was as if nature herself was hushed until we could accomplish our work of mercy, and never the slightest breath of wind stirred the foliage.

By straining my eyes I fancied it was possible to see something shadowy flit from one point to another, and then it seemed as if a second form came into view. I hoped these were Half-King and Running Deer, and at the same time feared they might be Indians on guard.

As a matter of course, Master Gist and I both held our muskets ready for instant use. Running Deer's weapon was slung over my back, he preferring to do the work with no other arms than his knife.

The suspense was terrible as we waited there in the darkness with every nerve strained to its utmost tension, fearing and almost expecting each instant to hear those sounds which would tell that the young Delaware's purpose had been discovered.

It is not probable that we remained thus more then ten or fifteen minutes; but it seemed to me as if fully two hours had elapsed since I last saw Running Deer, and then my heart leaped into my mouth, for it was possible to see two forms outlined against the sky, coming directly toward us.

I clutched Master Gist's arm to warn him that the first portion of the rescue had been accomplished, and he laid his hand on mine in token that he had seen the same, which caused the blood to bound in my veins until the skin was near to bursting.

Slowly the shadowy forms advanced until they stood directly in front of me—Master McQuire and Running Deer.

I gave to the Delaware his weapon, and then in single file we retraced our steps to the edge of the forest, neither daring to draw a long breath lest the sound should be sufficient to raise an alarm.

Five, ten minutes, and we were so far clear of the village that we could afford to move with less caution, therefore might make greater speed, and Running Deer, acting as guide, led us through the forest at a pace which taxed all my energies to maintain.

Master McQuire had been freed from the clutches of those fiends who would have found greatest pleasure in listening to his dying cries of pain; but now if we were to save the lives of all our party, rapid progress must be made.

Even under the most favorable circumstances we could not hope the escape would remain a se-

cret more than two hours—it might be discovered in five minutes, and when the fact was known half an hundred human bloodhounds would be in hot pursuit.

Speed, continued speed was our only salvation. We could not afford a single moment in which to learn what lay before us. Regardless of the many enemies in our path, we must press on, ever on until within the walls of Fort Necessity.

In case the Ottawas were scouting in the employ of the French near about the fortification, disaster must follow, unless we could beat them back; but we would take our chances of every danger so that we remained in advance of those who were certain to come from Logstown.

Of a verity our lives hung in the balance, and the lightest breath might cause the end, for us, of this world.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SURRENDER.

MANY times before that night on which we fled from Logstown did I believe my endurance had been tried to the point of breaking, but of a verity I never came so near sinking to the earth from sheer exhaustion, as before Running Deer slackened pace in order to permit of our regaining breath.

From the moment when the Delaware left Master Gist and me to seek out the prisoner, until we had pushed on through the forest at the top of our speed for a full three hours, not a word was spoken. Running Deer led the way, Master McQuire followed him, then came Master Gist, and I brought up the rear.

The day had dawned when the Delaware finally halted, and I was so nearly spent that I threw myself headlong on the earth to prevent a fall.

The other members of the party were not in much better condition. Each was breathing heavily, and speech then would have been impossible.

Running Deer had halted on the bank of a tiny stream, and although our throats were parched, it was necessary to wait a few moments until our tired lungs were rested, before we could drink.

No more than ten minutes were spent here, and then the Delaware said, his being the first voice that had been heard among us for more than three hours :

"We have not a moment to lose. The people of my tribe have been in pursuit for sometime, and there are swift runners among them—runners who can hold the pace six or eight hours without halting."

"Push ahead, lad, whenever you choose, and we'll make shift to keep at your heels," Master Gist replied. "You've managed this escape thus far, and we'll look upon you as the leader until we're safe, or have fought our last fight."

There were no words of praise which could have given the Delaware so much pleasure as this willingness in a man of Master Gist's station to acknowledge him as leader. It was ever in the lad's mind that the white men looked upon him as an inferior, and any recognition of his abilities caused great happiness.

We rinsed our mouths with water once more, taking care not to drink so much as would grat-

ify thirst, else would we have lagged in the race whereof the stakes were the lives of all, and then Running Deer set the pace once more.

Under ordinary circumstances each of us would have believed that by no more certain way could we compass our own death than in running headlong through the forest without giving heed to what might lay before us; but now we thought not of the possibilities because of what we knew beyond a peradventure was behind us.

An hour later we halted once more to drink a single mouthful of water, to wet our faces, and to make certain our muskets were ready for use. Then again we pressed madly forward toward Fort Necessity where, and only where, we could hope to find a refuge.

Twenty times during that day did I say to myself that it was absolutely impossible for me to take another step in either direction, and as often I forced myself forward, until finally I ran like one in a dream, without consciousness of exertion.

When the sun had set we all were come to an end of our strength; it was necessary that we seek some place of shelter, or fall headlong a few moments later.

Running Deer halted near a dense thicket of small pine bushes, among which a dozen men

might lay in hiding without fear of being discovered, unless one followed the trail, and as we entered the temporary refuge the brave lad, weary and exhausted even as were we, went back a dozen yards or more to cover with greatest caution our footprints.

Once in the midst of the pines we laid on the ground, too weary even to partake of the small amount of food we had brought with us from Logstown, and I was asleep before Running Deer returned from having covered the trail.

The story of this day's travel is the same as that of the succeeding days until we were happily come to Fort Necessity. It is true we did not constantly press on so rapidly, for that would have been impossible; but we made good use of every second of time, halting during the hours of daylight only so long as was absolutely necessary to regain our breath.

After the darkness of night came, we crawled into some thicket, and slept soundly until near to daybreak, when the exhausting journey was continued.

God permitted that we should never once be hindered in our flight by Ottawa scouts or French soldiers, although I doubt not there were many of both near our path.

Not until the second night did Master McQuire explain how he happened to be taken prisoner, and so weary was I that my eyes closed in slumber before he came to an end of his story.

However, I heard it in detail many times afterward, therefore can set it down here.

It seems our colonel knew, while we were loitering at Logstown, that a large number of Delawares had gone over to the French, and he argued that we must have the same information. Since the decision of the tribe had apparently been made, he was at a loss to understand why we lingered, and grew anxious regarding our safety.

It seemed to him probable we must have left Logstown when the first party of Delaware braves went into the French fort, and he feared some misfortune had overtaken us.

Discussing the matter with Master McQuire, the colonel expressed the wish that he had some one under his command who could be sent in search of us, whereupon the trader volunteered his services.

He proposed to begin the search at Logstown, and was making his way toward that village when the Delawares came upon him. Recognizing several members of the party, and believing they were friendly, he did not attempt to defend

himself, although it would have profited him little had he done so, since there were near thirty of the enemy, all well armed with French weapons.

Master McQuire declared again and again that when he saw us at Logstown he ceased to consider his situation very desperate, because to his mind it was positive we would undertake a rescue whatever the odds against us. That which caused him the most fear was the possibility that the Delawares would put him to torture on the same night of their arrival in the village, before we had had time to lay any plans.

It was during one of these night-halts that I learned how true to the English Half-King was, when we set about Master McQuire's release. He had been on the watch for Running Deer, and when the lad arrived, went with him to where the prisoner was bound to the tree, aiding in releasing the poor fellow, and in rubbing his cramped limbs until it was possible for him to use them.

Had the sachem been discovered in thus working to defeat his own people, a most shameful death would have been his, therefore did he take even greater chances in the rescue than either of us, save Running Deer. Even now, if the Delawares should have reason to believe that the lad had any hand in Master McQuire's escape, he

would be shunned by every member of the tribe, or, what is more probable, be hunted down like a dog.

Well, there is no good reason why I should go over all these "might have beens." It is enough if I say that we finally came to Fort Necessity, and the reception which was given us by all, from the commander to the lowest camp follower, was well calculated to turn a fellow's head, causing him to believe himself of more importance than really was the case.

Before there had been time in which to recover from the fatigues of the long, terrible flight, we came to understand that we were arrived none too soon.

The scouts had reported that a large number of Ottawa Indians were approaching the fort, and Colonel Washington himself told us he believed an attack would be made within the next eight and forty hours.

"And are we prepared for it?" Master Gist made bold to ask.

"Not fully. Since the retreat from your plantation our people have worked steadily strengthening the defenses. As you must have seen, it is nearly stockaded, and the earth-works are now surmounted by logs. It is in much better con-

dition than when you left; but we have no more than four hundred men to oppose a force of a thousand, which is the number I believe will be sent against us."

"If we could have persuaded the Delawares to support us!" Master Gist exclaimed, and our colonel, thinking the planter was reproaching himself with not having had better success at Logstown, said in a most friendly tone:

"There is no reason why you should take it to heart because the Delaware nation is divided, some on the side of the French, while others hold neutral; but none fighting for the English of Virginia. I believe a goodly number of them had already joined the enemy when you turned back, in which case there was no possibility of succeeding."

Having said this the colonel left us to go the rounds of the fort, as was his custom every hour, so I had been told, and Master Gist said with a grimace:

"It appears that we arrived in time to be of service, and by loitering at Logstown we saved McQuire's life, therefore we can't rightly say the days were wasted. Since the morning of the attack on Captain Jumonville's force, our men have done no more than march to and fro, throwing

up earth-works and abandoning them; but once we are in camp all hands begin to make ready for a battle."

"Surely you are not grumbling because we have come in good time, Master Gist?" I asked laughingly, whereupon the planter set about furbishing up his weapons, which was much the same as if he had said that the situation was by no means disagreeable to him.

Once more I must cut my story short by refraining from setting down the conversation we had with this man or that during the evening, and say that within fifteen hours after our arrival the enemy was upon us.

On the morning after we gained the shelter of the fort a heavy storm of rain set in, beginning just before daybreak, and within two hours the trenches were filled with water, while the entire inclosure was converted into a field of mud.

There was no thought in the mind even of the most cautious that the enemy would make an attack on this day, despite the fact that a large body of French and Indians was known to be near at hand, and I heard more than one man claim it was sheer foolishness to station sentinels while the rain was falling in torrents, because no Indian could be persuaded to venture out from cover.

Neither member of our independent company had been assigned to guard duty that day, probably because the officers thought it would be well we had an opportunity to celebrate our reunion, and all hands were lounging under the hut, which had been put in fairly good condition by Steward and Jenkins, when a man staggered through the northern gateway, the blood running down his face from a wound on the side of his head faster than the heavy downpour of rain could wash it away.

In a twinkling we comrades were surrounding him, eager at the same time to be of assistance, and to learn what had happened.

Fortunately the man was an old hand at Indian fighting, and retained his senses sufficiently to tell us a clear story.

He had been stationed as sentinel at the edge of the forest, about eighty yards from the northerly side of the fortification, and shortly after sunrise became convinced that hostile Indians were trying to creep up on him.

The sentinel's courage was good, and instead of retreating to the fort to call for assistance, he set about learning the truth for himself by advancing yet further into the thicket.

He succeeded in discovering beyond question

that a large number of Ottawas were near at hand, and at about the same time this information was gained, received a wound in the head. That he succeeded in effecting a retreat shows that he had both skill and pluck, which were sorely needed by us, else we in the fort might have remained in ignorance that an attack was imminent until the enemy was actually upon us.

While some of us carried the poor fellow to his quarters, for his strength gave way immediately he was in safety, Master Gist posted to Colonel Washington, and ten minutes later forty men had been told off, our company among the number, to scour the forest for information as to the whereabouts of the enemy.

Our orders were to avoid contact with the French scouts if possible ; save it might be to save his own life, no man was to discharge his weapon ; and all were to return to the fort immediately the desired information had been gained.

The task set us was not a long one, although attended with considerable danger, for we came upon scouting parties of the Ottawas before we had fairly entered the forest, which was sixty yards distant from the fort, and in half an hour knew beyond a peradventure that a large force of Frenchmen were drawn up about four miles away.

There could no longer be any doubt but that an attack was to be made during the day, despite the heavy storm of rain, which showed no signs of abating, and when we returned to the fortification our commander ordered the men into line.

Then we were marched outside the stockade to a stretch of level ground, just beyond the northerly line of breast-works, to await the first assault.

I was separated from my comrades for the time being, therefore had no one with whom to consult as to this last move. It seemed to me very strange that we should march out of the fort, which had cost so much time and labor to build, at the very moment when its shelter was most needed.

I could only explain the reason for the maneuver on the grounds that our trenches were filled with water, the level portion of the inclosure a perfect quagmire, and the logs which topped the embankments streaming with water, rendering it difficult for the men to keep their powder dry while loading the weapons.

On the outside, where our force had been drawn up in line of battle, we were not much better off, so far as protecting our muskets from moisture; but there was, perhaps, a trifle of advantage in

the situation, and Colonel Washington never lost sight of any chance in his favor.

Well, we remained in line, drenched to the skin, during two long hours, and not until then did the enemy show signs of life.

Suddenly we heard musketry firing within cover of the forest ; but never a glimpse of white man or red did we have.

Many of those who stood near me believed a force of English had come up from somewhere, and were engaged with the enemy ; but no one could say how friends of ours might be able to arrive in that vicinity, and I felt convinced that it was but a trick of the enemy to draw us further away from the fortification.

We remained in line, and the firing increased. It could be plainly seen that some of our men, those unused to warfare, were growing very nervous, therefore our commander marched to and fro urging us to stand steady, discharging no gun until an enemy could be seen with sufficient distinctness to permit of our taking aim.

As the minutes passed, however, it was apparent that Colonel Washington's words failed of effect. A goodly number of our people were growing so nervous that there was imminent danger they would break away despite positive orders to the

contrary, and rush into the forest under the belief that a body of English was there in need of assistance.

Once that had been done, it is safe to say every man who gained the cover of the trees would have been cut down, and I was growing thoroughly frightened when the command was given for us to return to the fort.

Then it was that I sought out my comrades, and found them woefully dispirited and uneasy.

"What have you seen?" I demanded of Master Gist, and he replied in anger:

"No more than must have come to your notice. Two-thirds of this force know as much about fighting as they do of making petticoats! It was only with great difficulty the colonel prevented them from falling victims to the poor trick of the Frenchmen, and I believe of a verity had he tried to hold us in line five minutes longer, a full half of these so-called soldiers would have gone streaming off into the forest where their scalps could have been taken without much bother. If they cannot be depended upon at a time when the veriest coward should be able to stand firm, what will be the result after the battle has begun?"

He was but giving words to the fears in my

own mind, and that the remainder of our company had indulged in similar speculations, I knew because never one of them spoke.

We were disheartened, dismayed, afraid ! Not because of the enemy ; but on account of our companions.

That which is so unpleasant for me in the telling cannot be cheerful reading, and I am minded to give the events of this disastrous day in very few words.

After we had re-entered the fort the enemy appeared in small numbers at the edge of the woods, and from that time until sunset we were engaged as sharpshooters, picking off a Frenchman or an Indian whenever we had the opportunity, while they on their side did us the same favor.

It was not a battle, but a trial of skill during which we suffered considerably ; but, as I hope, most sincerely, we succeeded in inflicting a greater loss upon the foe.

Just how many of our people were killed or wounded during the day I am unable to say with accuracy. Master Gist and McQuire, however, set it down as reasonably certain that our loss did not exceed twenty wounded and four killed. I personally saw more than twelve of the enemy fall dead under our fire, therefore it is safe to say

that not less than twice that number were disabled.

The storm continued without intermission ; our clothing was saturated with water and covered with mud. Many of the men lost the powder in their horns through falling into the trenches, which resembled small brooks, and, take it all in all, our people were jaded, half-drowned, and harassed until all were prepared for that which followed.

Our company saw very little of each other during that mournful day. Colonel Washington gave each of us much individual duty to perform, and it was not until near to eight o'clock in the evening that we all met at our hut.

Then Steward had prepared supper, and welcome indeed was food at that time, for we had not broken our fast ; but it was destined that we should remain hungry a while longer.

The report of several muskets, followed by loud shouts, brought us out of the hut and to the northerly line of breast-works in a twinkling, we of the independent company arriving there just as the sentinels had succeeded in understanding that a messenger was come from the French commander with a communication for Colonel Washington.

After some delay the newcomer was ordered to be given admittance after having been blindfolded lest he should be able to take note of our condition, and Master Gist turned away from the breast-works with a long-drawn sigh.

"What is it?" I asked, although I should not have been at a loss to answer my own question.

"A summons to surrender," he replied mournfully, and Running Deer cried scornfully:

"It is but a waste of time to come on that business!"

"I'm afraid that's where you are making a mistake, lad," Master Gist said as he led the way back to our hut. "I'm of the opinion that our commander can do no less than accept the terms, if they are in any way generous."

"Would you give up the fort?" Running Deer asked in astonishment, looking around at the traders and myself to learn what we thought of such an idea.

"Ay, lad, and it seems to me that our colonel can do no less."

"But four hundred men should be able to hold this fort against a thousand Frenchmen!" the Delaware exclaimed.

"True for you! Even three hundred *men* could hold it; but you have seen this day that we

have mighty poor material for fighting. I question if we could muster an hundred who would stand their ground against a determined assault, and however brave those hundred might be, they must work at a disadvantage in this sea of mud and water."

There is no reason why I should attempt to set down all that we said among ourselves while the messenger was with Colonel Washington, and later, when the details were being discussed by some of our officers who had been sent to the French lines.

This much we learned next morning :

The enemy was under command of Colonel De Villiers, a brother of that Captain Jumonville whom we had killed ; but not of the same name because of a title held by one or the other. There were nine hundred white men and three hundred Indians in the enemy's force, and the terms offered us were that Colonel Washington's command might march out of the fort with the honors of war ; that is to say, with drums beating and colors flying. We were to be allowed to take with us all baggage and military stores, except the cannon, which were to be destroyed.

Well, before daylight it was told us that the terms had been accepted by our commander under

advice of his officers. Fort Necessity was to be surrendered, and all that portion of our work had been a failure.

We afterward came to know that our colonel had been forced to agree that the prisoners taken at the time Captain Jumonville was killed, should be delivered to the French at the earliest possible moment.

I have no stomach, even if I had the time, which I have not because of what is doing here at Valley Forge, to tell how we marched out beaten; how the Ottawas made an attack upon us, nor how we were forced to destroy nearly all we counted on taking with us, therefore I will set down an account written by one of our officers after his arrival in Williamsburg:

"The next morning, accordingly, Colonel Washington and the men marched out of the forlorn fortress with the honors of war, bearing with us our régimental colors, but leaving behind a large flag too cumbrous to be transported. Scarcely had we begun the march, however, when in defiance of the terms of capitulation, we were beset by a large body of Indians, allies to the French, who began plundering the baggage, and committing other irregularities.

"Seeing that the French did not, or could not,

prevent them, and that all the baggage which could not be transported on the shoulders of the troops would fall into the hands of the savages, for the horses had been killed or lost during the retreat from Gist's plantation, Colonel Washington ordered it to be destroyed, as well as the artillery, gunpowder and other military stores. This detained us until ten o'clock, when once more we set out on our melancholy march.

"We had not proceeded above a mile or two when two or three of the wounded men were reported to be missing. The colonel immediately detached Master Gist and his companions who had joined us as scouts, back in quest of them, and continued on until three miles from Fort Necessity, where we encamped for the night. Before morning we were rejoined by the stragglers.

"During the following day's march the troops seemed jaded and disheartened; they were encumbered and delayed by the wounded; provisions were scanty, and we had seventy weary miles to accomplish before we could meet with supplies. The colonel, however, encouraged them by his own steadfast and cheerful demeanor, and by sharing all their toils and privations, until at length he conducted us in safety to Will's Creek, where we found ample provisions in the military magazines.

Leaving the force there to recover their strength, the commander, with two of the officers, pushed on to Williamsburg to make our military report.

"A copy of the capitulation was subsequently laid before the Virginia House of Burgesses, with explanations. Notwithstanding the unfortunate result of the campaign, the conduct of our colonel and his officers was properly appreciated, and we received a vote of thanks for our bravery and gallant defense of the country. About eleven hundred dollars were voted to be distributed among the privates who had been in action."

* * * * * *

Of all that independent company who attempted so much and accomplished so little, Running Deer and I only are here at Valley Forge. We both hold commissions as lieutenants; but are counting on forcing ourselves up several grades before the close of this coming season's work.

It was when I had come nearly to a close of this story, poor as it is in the telling and painful though it be in results, that news came to us of the probable evacuation of Philadelphia within a very short time, on hearing which General, the Baron Steuben, advised me to bring my labors to a speedy close.

That I have followed his advice can be seen.

From our point of view, referring to Running Deer and myself, it has been a happy idea, this writing down what we did in the wilderness and around Fort Necessity, for the work has occupied our thoughts when otherwise we should have realized more keenly how much we were suffering from cold and hunger.

General, the Baron Steuben, has had the bravery to carry the sheets to General Washington as fast as I have delivered them to him, and I am told that the commander-in-chief gives some of us greater praise than I have been willing to state, lest I be accused of vanity.

Now it is announced on good authority that Sir Henry Clinton is on the eve of evacuating Philadelphia. Our army, in much better condition than when we came into these winter quarters, is under marching orders, ready to set out at a moment's notice, and I dare venture to predict that before the redcoats succeed in reaching New York, for it is there they must go, we will have given his majesty, George the Third, such an account of Continental soldiers as shall cause him to ask himself if he had better not give up all hope of holding as slaves people who are determined to be free.

THE END.

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